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THE HOLY TRINITY

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**A CONTRIBUTION TO THE STUDY OF MISSIONARY
METHODS**

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THE HOLY TRINITY

A STUDY OF THE SELF-REVELATION OF GOD

BY

LOUIS GEORGE MYLNE, M.A., HON. D.D. (OXON.)

RECTOR OF ALVECHURCH, WORCESTERSHIRE, SOMETIME BISHOP OF BOMBAY

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Dedication.

TO THE MEMORY OF

JOHN RICHARDSON ILLINGWORTH, M.A., D.D.

TO WHOM, IN LIFE, THE WRITER OWED MORE
THAN HE CAN EXPRESS

FOREWORD

WHILE this book has been laboriously struggling into being, its writer has been constantly haunted by the thought that he cannot make adequate, detailed acknowledgment of his debts to his different masters respectively: its table of references is lamentably defective. He has not designedly concealed his obligations, or dreamt that he could ever pass as his own the thoughts of a Martensen, a Hooker, or a Newman. It is just that the conditions under which he has worked have made it impossible to trace the ideas to the sources from which they originally came. Had he been called upon to write in the favoured days when Theology and its expression were the staple of his work, it had been easy to have checked off debt after debt, and given thanks exactly where thanks were due. But to peaceful days of lecturing at Oxford there succeeded some twenty-one years in the East, when the care of an unwieldy Indian Diocese left little scope for study or thought. One could but chew a meditative cud over nutriment taken under other conditions. But this secured that somewhere or other, in hidden, subconscious thought, materials were taking synthetic shape. And so, when the call for a book was made, they had just to be got to the surface again, and used in the form into which they had cast themselves. He allowed himself two years for putting them together: the process has dragged its slow length over nine. Where-

ever the thoughts originally came from, he has had to give them a form of his own. After all those years, it was that or nothing; they were there in that particular shape, and he could not now recast them. Many come from the great Athanasius directly, many more from that "Master of those who" adore, mediated through Hooker or Newman or Wilberforce; many from Martensen, most suggestive of moderns; some from Dorner, some from Thomassin; not a few from Dr. Illingworth and Aubrey Moore; most of all, perhaps, from St. Augustine de Trinitate. But to disentangle the various debts was more than the writer dared to attempt: the nine years' process might have grown to nineteen, and left itself still half done. And so the little book has had to go forth with half its obligations unacknowledged. If readers find that it has anything to give them, they are asked to believe that many great masters can answer for the helpful matter that it holds: while little beyond its outward shape, a shape which it took by inevitable process, is due to those masters' humble scholar.

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CHAPTER I.

THE DEVOTIONAL VALUE OF BELIEF IN THE HOLY TRINITY.

HE who would interest English readers in the Doctrine of the Three in One, in its meaning and in its history, has no light task before him. Even doctrines less difficult and recondite must be shown to be no mere abstractions before attention will be paid to them. They have to prove that their value can be tested by other standards of results than those of orthodoxy and correctness. How far this is gain or loss to English Christianity in general, and especially to that of our Church, we need not here pause to consider. It is fact, and patent fact, that by the bulk of English Christians, both within and without the Church, Doctrine considered as Doctrine is looked upon as difficult, uninviting, possibly even repellent. Whatever might be the ultimate consequences of eliminating from public worship the use of the Athanasian Creed, most incumbents know too well that one immediate result would be a feeling of intense relief to many among their congregations; with a comfortable consciousness to themselves that they had gained in sympathy with their people. And this would still be the case if the Warning Clauses were struck out. It

is detailed doctrinal statement as such which jars on many of our people.

Again, there are few preachers among us who do not look forward with misgivings to the approach of Trinity Sunday. They know that on that day at any rate they have to choose, when they enter the pulpit, between ignoring the teaching of the day and going through a struggle, perhaps unsuccessful, to command a bare semblance of interest on the part of many of their hearers—hearers, perhaps, at other times, interested, sympathetic, even eager.

Or if the preacher at some other season should dwell a little too long on the doctrinal aspect of the Festival, a chill seems to spread through his audience, and soon to react on himself. Uninterested, if respectful, attention is the most that he can hope to command.

Now the primary object of the following pages is to bring before devout English Christians this Doctrine, so difficult, so abstruse, of the Three Adorable Persons ; and that not only on its practical side, not only on the side of devotion, but as truth to be received for salvation, however it transcend our comprehension.

Practical it is, as is every truth revealed by God to man. Infinitely valuable again, in its bearing on prayer and contemplation. Glorious with a glory all its own, on that very doctrinal side which seems to many, alas! so abstract, and therefore so uninteresting.

But if this assertion is to justify itself, the value of this truth must first be drawn out on the side of devotion and of practice.

It is the earnest prayer of the writer that he may bring out these two considerations—how much more devout we may become, how much more earnest in our practice, if we enter intelligently and patiently into the meaning of “what we chiefly learn in the Articles of our Belief” :—“firstly, to believe in God the Father, Who hath made me and all the world; secondly, in God the Son, Who hath redeemed me and all mankind, and, thirdly, in God the Holy Ghost, Who sanctifieth me and all the elect people of God”.

If he succeed in effecting this in the present and the following chapter, he may hope that the remainder of the book will be followed, and lovingly accepted; that he may help fellow-members of Christ to appreciate the inestimable service which the Church has done to her children in propounding for their humble acceptance the Doctrine of the Trinity in Unity.

How, then, may we hope to be better men and women for believing with devout submission in the truth about the Nature of God? How shall we grow more devout towards God, and how more helpful to man, for believing intelligently in the Three in One?

First, then, on the devotional side, our whole conception of the Character of God, of the love which He claims at our hands just for what He is in Himself, gains a new and higher meaning from belief in His subsisting from Eternity as very Love itself, not in a solitary Majesty of Power, unloving and unloved.

To this thought the reader will be asked to revert through all the doctrinal disquisitions contained in the following pages. And therefore, before we enter upon

them, he is invited to dwell at some length on the gain which comes to our prayers from believing in the Threefold Being in which God reveals Himself through Christ.

A metaphor from the natural world may be a help in introducing this subject. To those who have communed with nature in the more majestic manifestations of her beauty, there is an hour when the passion of the mountains enters deepest into heart and affections. All day long between yourself and the sky there has towered in majestic repose the outline of eternal snow, the awful sublimity of its strength unrelieved by anything more tender. The glacier crawls down the hollows, irresistible in its ceaseless advance, the avalanche thrills all things with its thunder, the haunting voice of the cataracts is all around you in the air, a terrible, forbidding glory mantles round the inaccessible cliffs—all is majesty ; of sympathy there is none. By these the imagination is stirred to its depths. But it is a different aspect of the mountains which wins its way to the heart.

When the sun has set in the valleys, the peaks still tower into its glory. And as the twilight deepens where you stand, you see them gradually thrilled into tenderness. Like a face where a softer expression is banishing hardness and pride, they are lighted, transfigured, suffused with the flush of a gentler hue. There is a tender, pleading beauty where all was sublimity and sternness. The solitude of glory has departed ; an ineffable sympathy takes its place.

Then, moment by moment, as you gaze, the warmer effulgence disappears. There is no return of

the triumphant splendour which maintained itself all through the day. But in a horror of utter desolation, in a blank of solitude shudderingly confessed, the mountains seem to plead for your compassion as they appealed for your sympathy but now. The power of granite and ice is no longer around you alone : it passes like a passion into your blood : and henceforth bears no small part in your reading of Providence and of life.

Now to reverent believers in the Catholic Faith who have aspired to commune with God in His fullest revelation of Himself, belief in the Eternal Triunity of His Nature is like the sunset flush upon the mountains. The thought of Him as other than He is, of the solitary ONE of Unitarianism or of Islam, resembles, in the eyes of a Catholic believer, that shuddering moment of desolation when the glow on snow and rock shivered off into hardness and night.

It has appeared, no doubt, to many people, perhaps to some of the readers who will make an attempt on this book, that of all cold, chilling abstractions which have ever encountered them in theology, the Doctrine set forth in the *Quicumque vult* was the one which appealed to them with least of attractiveness. If such should be found among his readers, or among his would-be readers, the writer would appeal to them here to believe that, in intention at least, he would place this Mystery before them as that which, so far from being abstract and cold, represents the Being Whom they love in the tenderest of possible lights. Indeed, that all the most loving associations which

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belong to His dealings with ourselves are dependent, in the ultimate resort, on His being what He is in His Threefold Unity.

It was only, of course, when God became Man, that this mystery of His Triune Being emerged into clearness as actually revealed. A distant surmise of its glorious possibility may have shone through some phrases of Psalmist and Prophet, revealing His love for the creatures of His Hand. It might seem that it could be no cold Deity like Allah, aloof from His creation in solitary glory, to Whom the soul of Psalmists went forth when they wrote of panting for God as the hart desireth the waterbrooks; or when heart and flesh longed after the living God. Or if all that He is to His creatures can only be the outcome in time of what He is in His Eternal Nature, we might ask whether He Who could make Himself known by such words as, "thy Maker is thy Husband," must not have been believed to be very Love before He had aught to love beyond the Godhead Itself.

But these could have been, at the best, only inferences dimly groped after. Something far more intimate was needed before it could be grasped by human thought that the Oneness which constitutes the glory of God was compatible with His having some Object to love before aught existed save Himself; that JEHOVAH, the great I AM of the Covenant, while distinguished from all the gods of the heathen by His being unapproachably the ONE, was never a solitary Monad with nothing to know and nothing to love, but had within His own Essential

Nature a Personal Wisdom and a Personal Love of which ours are but bloodless shadows.

At length, One appeared upon earth Who "made Himself equal with God" (St. John v. 18), Who claimed again and again prerogatives peculiar to Very Divinity, Who said of Himself, "before Abraham came into being, I AM" (St. John viii. 58). Then His followers began, in a dim, groping way to take in that the Prophet of Nazareth not only spoke in the Name of the Lord, as other prophets had done, but uttered in the accents of a Human Friend the authentic Voice of God Himself.

More than this—He must needs be (Rom. i. 4) "declared the Son of God with power by the Resurrection from the dead," before He was hailed with the adoring confession, "my Lord and my God" (St. John xx. 28). Nor was it till all these things had been meditated over by St. Paul and St. John, that it came to be fully discerned that the only key to the power of His work was to be found in the Divinity of His Person.

It was from this that there grew up in the mind of the Church belief in Distinctions or Relations internal to the Godhead Itself; which Distinctions, for want of more adequate terms, we know as the Subsistence of Three Persons in the Unity of the One Divine Nature.

These Persons are set forth in the Apostolic Epistles, as the needs of the different Churches required. And they ultimately had to be defined by Councils as binding on the consciences of Christian people.

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The Revelation, then, of the Older Dispensation, that God could love His creatures with an everlasting Love, stopped short of that higher conception with which we are dealing at present. It was not till "the Word was made Flesh and tabernacled among us" (St. John 1. 14), that further knowledge came—that we learnt how the Love with which He loves men is the outcome of a higher Love still, of His being in Himself, from Eternity, LOVE.

But a Love which required for its full satisfaction nothing less than a Personal Union between God and His Own Creation, a Love which can descend into a world of sin to take sinners into its embrace in a mystical, sacramental union, would be wholly past belief, did it not find its ultimate explanation in the Nature and Character of God—a Being, the Self of Whose Self is Love, Love Personal, Love Essential, Love actually at work from Eternity when nought existed save Himself.

When God had been known, had been conversed with, as tabernacling here among men; when one who was His human friend, who had lain on His Bosom and looked into His Eyes, could proclaim as His message to the world, "That which was from the beginning, that which we have heard, that which we have seen with our eyes, that which we have looked upon and our hands have handled concerning the Word of life, . . . that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you also, that ye also may have fellowship with us : yea, and our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ" (1 John 1.

1 and 3), then the question must be asked and answered—how comes it that “such manner of love should be bestowed upon us by the Father, that we should be called children of God—and such we are?” (1 John III. 1). And to this the full answer came by His revealing the further truth that Love, with Objects for its exercise, is essential to His inmost Being, that He loves us because HE IS LOVE.

Now this and nothing else is the Doctrine of the Trinity in Unity. That Doctrine is the form in which God makes it known, so far as we are able to grasp it, that Love, not only possible but actual, that Love with Eternal Objects for its exercise, is part of the Being of God Most High; nay, that it alone, of all His Attributes, is so entirely the Essence of His Being, that we are told that “God is Love” (1 John IV. 8), in a way in which we never are told that He is Power or that He is Wisdom, though both are His essential and characteristic Attributes.

For the full elaboration of this thought on the side of doctrinal belief, the reader is referred to Chapters V.-XIV. A brief expansion of a devotional kind may be appended here.

When we declare our belief in the Holy Trinity, we do but enunciate in technical terms the following glorious truth—that in a Being Eternally perfect in Himself the Attributes of Wisdom and Love are not, as they are in ourselves, mere qualities or powers or facts of His Existence; that Wisdom, in Him, means something more than being wise, and Love, in Him, means something more than being loving. That the

Wisdom with which He is wise has a Being Eternal as His Own, not separate from His Own very Being, yet not identical with It. That between Him Who from Eternity is wise and the Personal Wisdom with Which He is wise there subsists an Eternal intercourse of Love. And that this Love, Eternal as His Being and His Wisdom, is Itself of a Personal Nature, not separable from His Being or His Wisdom, yet, again, not identical with Him, or with His Wisdom, to the exclusion of all distinction.

This Wisdom is also revealed as His Son, when our attention is called to His veritable Personality, to His being something more than an Attribute of the Godhead. This Love is also revealed as His Spirit, that we may think of Him also as truly Divine; as a Person with relations, all His Own, to ourselves.

On the truth of the Eternal Wisdom of God we need not dwell further here. On that of His being eternally Love it will be very helpful to dwell. Once grasped, it brings out the truth of His Nature in a light so irresistibly winning that no one who has taken it in, and understood that it is contained in the Doctrine of the Trinity, could hold any effort too hard which, by aiding his intelligent hold of the Doctrine, can deepen his conception of the spiritual fact.

Regarded, then, on its spiritual side, the Doctrine of the Trinity in Unity amounts to nothing less than this—it is the form in which God makes it known, so far as we are able to grasp it, that Love, with all that Love implies, subsists from all Eternity between Three

Persons in God, and that without infringement of the truth of His Unity.

It was not till Christ was recognized by His own as Divine-Human Mediator with God, that it really dawned on mankind that there must be distinctions internal to the Godhead, between Persons essentially Divine—Persons Whose Relations to each other are what constitute the very Being in which He subsists as God ; that what we call in our human terms the Generation of the Son and the Procession of the Spirit are facts of the Eternal Nature of God, essentials of all its glorious reality ; that it is these which account for that Love to ourselves which make Him all that we know Him to be in Creation, Redemption, and Grace. More than this, that we may reverently dare to affirm that all that we have known Him to be to ourselves is, in a sense, the necessary outcome of His being essentially Wisdom and Love, not solitary Majesty and Power.

To express this again in yet other phraseology, the Being in Whom we believe, if we hold the Faith of the Blessed Trinity, is One, Indivisible, Perfect. Yet this Oneness does not mean solitude ; this Indivisibility does not mean monotony ; the Oneness contains in Itself all the elements, all the possibilities, nay all the actual perfections, which we associate with the thought of companionship, of the intercourse of personal beings. For we believe in One Eternal Father, Eternally begetting from Himself One Son, His Wisdom, His Image, His Effulgence, Eternal and Incomprehensible (that is to say, transcending time and space), Very God, as the Father Himself.

And, next, within the Godhead Itself, we believe that there Eternally subsists a Relation of mutual Contemplation between Him Who begets and Him Who is begotten, between Him Who is Wise and His Eternal Wisdom, between Him Who originates and Him Who derives, between the Light and His Effulgence, between the Original Being and His Eternal Reproduction.

But to think of Eternal Contemplation between Two Divine Beings, without at the same time conceiving of an equally Eternal Love as subsisting and passing between Them, were obviously impossible or blasphemous ; for this were to conceive of the All-Perfect as lower than the lowest of creatures that can love : to believe in a Duality in the Godhead without believing in a Trinity were therefore worse than absurd—it were wholly derogatory and profane.

Accordingly we believe that between Father and Son there obtains an Eternal interchange of Love which we call the Procession of the Spirit from the Father and from the Son. And this Procession it is which constitutes the Being of the Spirit, Eternal and Personal as the Father and the Son. There is, then, that within the Godhead, whose analogy in human life is to be found in the intercourse of family love. There is a social element in the Being of God, an Eternity of Fellowship, of Affection, to which our human affections are related as shadows to Realities. For St. Paul speaks of God, “the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,” as One “from Whom every fatherhood in heaven and on earth is named ” (Ephesians III. 15).

This conception of God as Love is the highest that we can form about His Nature : the Reality which corresponds to that conception surpasses in its glorious fact all else that we can think of in Him. But it is part of the Infinite Perfection which belongs to the fact and to our idea of it, that it should not depend for its reality on the existence of aught save God Himself. Could we think of His Love as having ever existed in a bare, unrealized potentiality ; had there been a far-off Eternity in which He had nothing to love ; had His Love depended for its actual exercise on the existence of finite beings, the work of His creative Power ; had there ever been a loveless state as a moment in the Divine Being ; then how could we conceive of our God as having been from Eternity Perfect ? If we try to conceive of a loveless Creator emerging from Eternal solitude to create the first man or the first angel, we shall find that we regard Him as not having been Perfect before this Creative Act.

For all love pre-supposes an object before it can emerge from possibility into action, from the region of the might-be into positive fact. There reside in the heart of every woman the possibilities of maternal affection. Yet a new world of love opens out to her, passes out of bare, cold potentiality into actual, glorious fact, when her face first thrills into tenderness at the sight and touch of her child.

Now in the creature we find this sufficient. We do not ask in such as ourselves for anything but capacities, potentialities, as the original groundwork of character. But only Perfection eternally realized can

satisfy the highest conceptions that man can form of his God. And this demands Plurality of Persons within the Essence of the Godhead, to assure us that before the worlds were, He was Love and had That Which He could love. This theme will recur again and again in the doctrinal development of our subject. Suffice it to have indicated here that its deep devotional value forms one of the primary considerations accounting for the stress laid upon it in the Church's teaching of her children.

This more adequate conception of God in the adorable Loveliness of His Being, results in very definite gain to the entire devotional life. But another and a well-nigh incalculable benefit consists in the vividness and tenderness which accrue to approaches to God when the Triune Mystery of His Being is present to the consciousness of the worshipper. That Being is absolutely and inseparably ONE. Yet within that indissoluble Unity there is more than a threefold character under which He permits us to draw near Him : there are verily and indeed Three distinct Personalities to Whom we may venture to address ourselves.

Our approaches to God and our thoughts about Him in this Threefold Mystery of His Being, bring out three relations to ourselves which find their human analogies in the three most perfect relations in which we can stand to one another, the relation of parent with child, the relation of brother with brother, and, last and most perfect of all, the highest of human relationships, in which two are absolutely one. He is

Father, He is Brother, He is Husband to those who have given themselves to Him.

Take in that it is not simply the ONE, inviting and receiving our approaches under three distinct aspects or characters; but that it is God the Father, the Origin of all, to Whom we address ourselves as children; that it is God the Son, the Incarnate, Who invites us to His Arms as our Brother; that it is God the Holy Ghost, the Indweller, Who makes Himself the Self of our self, One nearer and dearer to each than our own proper natural self; and there results a closeness of communion, a reality of personal intercourse, which is possible in no other way. Through belief in the Three in One, we know that we have a Brother, bringing us back to His Father, and that He has done so by taking our nature on Himself, and uniting it personally with the Divine. And we know that there is a Husband of the regenerate soul, Who makes us "one spirit" with the Lord; Who mystically fulfils in the experience of each that craving for union with God which has led illuminated souls in many an age and country to dream of being lost in the Divine, absorbed, swallowed up in God. These glories are made, through belief in the Three Persons, the present mystical inheritance of every follower of Christ.

If the thoughts expressed in the preceding pages have been conveyed with any clearness, they must have left one leading impression—that man's approaches to God are invited with quite new winningness when once the Mystery of His Threefold Being has been definitely revealed to the world.

But something more than this is required to bring out the devotional gain which accrues to us from this Revelation. The more lovable God is known to be, the lower must man be felt to have fallen when he sins against a Being such as this. The words, "against Thee only have I sinned," must attain a new poignancy of regret, must involve a new sense of vileness, of unworthiness to enter His Presence, when He to Whom they are addressed is known to be not only Absolute Holiness but Eternal Love itself. Man's natural craving for a Mediator with Him can only be intensified, not done away, by the light which falls upon sin when God is more fully understood.

It were hardly more than the truth to say that the history of human Religion is the history of the idea of Mediation, of Sacrifice, of Propitiation, and of the various ritual and practical forms under which this idea has been clothed, under which it has been felt that effect might be given to it. But each and all of these, save only the Atonement of Jesus Christ, has broken down because of one great lack—the necessary precedent condition of man's approach to God is the approach of God to man. A heathen king (Micah vi. 6-8) might inquire of his prophet wherewith he might approach to God, and might name all the costliest offerings with which, as he supposed, propitiation could be made: the prophet might enumerate in return the simple moral offerings of justice and mercy and a humble walk: yet, when all was said and all was corrected, there remained the one insuperable barrier, that without the aid of God Himself, Whom man is

unworthy to approach, the moral offering precious in His Sight must still remain unoffered, being beyond the reach of man; in a word, that only through God Himself can man acceptably draw near to God.

The Religion of Jesus our Lord is that of Divine Mediation, of approach to God through God Himself. The conditions of true Mediation are attainable only through precedent union between God, to Whom the approach has to be made, and man by whom it must be actually attempted. This meeting in a single Person of all that God can require and all that man can need was brought about once for all in the Incarnation.

From man's side, Christ draws near to God as wholly One with man. On God's side, He is accepted as equally One with God. He is Offerer and Offering, if regarded as Man. As God, He has His part in accepting the Sacrifice, as Man, He is qualified to present it.

For in His Original and Essential Nature He is Very God of Very God. And in the Nature assumed at the Incarnation He is Very Man of a human Mother. He is strictly the daysman between God and man, "Who can lay His Hand upon both" (Job ix. 33): for He is One with man in the body and soul which He offers in propitiatory Sacrifice; while in His Divinity He is One with the Father, to Whom that Sacrifice is offered—One with Him in the Holiness, nay, in the Nature, which renders the Offering worthy.

But this belief in the possibility of Atonement, in that which renders Atonement possible, carries with

it as a necessary complement, belief in Distinctions internal to the Godhead. For, as we shall see in what follows, there can be, for Christian thinkers, only One Divine Being. To speak of a plurality of gods were to violate the primary conception which lies behind all our beliefs about God. And yet that belief in Atonement, by which propitiation in the Christian sense is differentiated from every non-Christian belief, lies just in the very fact that the Human Mediator Who offers the Sacrifice is One with the Deity to Whom it is offered, as sharing in One Essential Nature which belongs to Both from Eternity. Explain it how we will—or disclaim the possibility of explanation, which is far the wiser course—the kernel of Christian belief, the explanation of Christian hope, the bond of Christian love, is the assurance that in the Person of Christ there passed between Two Beings, each wholly Divine in Himself, yet each inseparable from the other, the offering on one side, the acceptance on the other, of that which effected once for all a new *status* for man towards His Maker. All freedom, all fulness, all confident fearlessness, in a Christian's approach to God, lies in this as an accepted fact. Each prayer offered up by each child of God on the footing of filial approach derives its essential characteristics from the fact that we no longer draw near on the basis of first approaching to Him that He may approach to us, but on something the converse of this—draw nigh unto Me, He bids us under the Gospel, because I have first drawn nigh to you in the Person of My well-beloved Son.

Every single prayer, then, which a Christian puts up, takes for granted its own acceptability with God in virtue of the very beliefs which are guarded by the minatory clauses of the Athanasian Creed. It is those who would rob us of the common salvation that are warned about imperilling their own.

This holds, of course, in a most special sense in our approaches to God at the Altar. But the Eucharist, in this, as in other regards, is only the culminating moment of the life of Christian devotion. In it we are offering to God of His own, in the sense that the One High Priest, "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Rev. XIII. 8), is actually with us in Sacramental Presence. But always, everywhere, in every aspiration, as well as in the stateliest, most solemn of Rites, it is the Victim of Calvary alone Who renders our approaches acceptable. *Through* Christ, we say after every prayer—*in* Christ is a still more comprehensive expression—as mystically one with Him, as members of His Body on earth and in Heaven, as being, in the perpetual Sacramental footing on which we stand with God, nothing else than partakers of His Son's Incarnation. It is on this ground alone, as being thus made one with the Father, that we plead to be received and blessed.

The very Divinity of Jesus our Lord has been shown in the paragraphs above to be only the equivalent in doctrinal truth of the fact that God has drawn near to man to enable man to draw near to God. What, then, is the equivalent on the devotional side of the companion truth that the Holy Ghost is Divine?

That even when God has approached to our Race by taking our nature upon Him in an actual, personal Union, the beginning, middle and end of man's response to such Love has still to be inspired by God Himself before it can be made in its fulness. Our very prayers must be inspired by Him, and inspired by Him they are. Not only does the Spirit teach us to pray; He actually prays in us: "Because ye are sons God sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying Abba Father" (Gal. iv. 6). That is to say, we are so made partakers in Christ of all that God makes Him to us, that the words which He took into His Lips at the supremest moment of His earthly prayers we may take and use as our own; may believe that in so taking and using them we respond to a Divine inspiration. God resides, we may say, at the centre of our being; so that, alike in the practical efforts which we make, and in the devotional breathings which go up from us before the Throne, He Himself is the active principle, inspiring and controlling all. "Having therefore"—because, in Christ, God has first drawn near to us, and because, through the Presence of His Spirit, He enables our approaches to Himself—"Having therefore boldness to enter into the holy place . . . let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith" (Heb. x. 19-22).

NOTE.

THE DEPENDENCE OF THE CHRISTIAN CONCEPTION OF THE LOVE OF GOD TO HIS CREATURES ON BELIEF IN THE TRINITY IN UNITY—JUDAISM, THE MATRIX OF THE GOSPEL, CONTRASTED WITH ISLAM, THE REACTION AGAINST IT.

If this attribution of Fatherliness to God be compared with the highest teaching about Him under any non-catholic system, we shall find that its devotional value is marvellously enhanced by the contrast. A conception of Him apart from all love were to us imperfect, even horrible. If we try to depict to ourselves a Being with Eternal Personality, absolute Power, unbounded Knowledge, in Whose Nature Love has no part; then in clear-cut, abhorrent coldness there stands out a dread vision before us—One from Whom we cannot escape, because the Eye of His Omniscience is everywhere; in Whose Hand we lie passive and helpless, held tight in an Omnipotent grasp; worse than mere blind, ruthless Fate, inasmuch as personal impassibility must have in it an element of cruelty. Blind fate, the mere mechanical working in which a vast machine grinds on, would be without the horrid trait that it could see our smiles of happiness and hear our groans of pain, and remain unmoved by either. But a Personal Omnipotence and Omniscience apart from Personal Love, creating us with no fatherly thought, ruling us with no tender affection, Who knew and read and dealt with us in very wantonness of Power—the other were cold and unlovely; this were nothing less than hateful; no escape, no appeal, no recognition, and yet Knowledge, Power, and Personality.

It might be argued, perhaps, that we could believe in God loving His creatures without a theological system which

shows Him to be LOVE itself, in His Own proper Nature, from Eternity. But how do things stand about this in the region of actual facts?

There are two Religions in the world in which the One God has been worshipped without distinction of Persons, the more ancient Religion of the Jews and the more recent system of Mohammed.

One of these, the Faith of Islam, regards the idea of Incarnation as contradicting its first conception of God. It asserts His absolute Transcendence as a principle excluding, of necessity, the thought of His according us union with Himself. It treats the essential Unity of His Being as proving belief in His Threefold Personality to be a blasphemous perversion of the truth. From which it necessarily follows that it forbids belief in Eternal Love, subsisting within His Nature itself, as forming the first essential of His Being. And therefore, from its earliest inception, it has been the uncompromising foe of Christianity. We may indeed go farther than this, may affirm that one of the objects which its Founder set before himself was to crush what he held to be the Tritheism of Christianity, and bring back a deluded World to belief in the Unity of God. Now in this faith of monistic Unity, which excludes from the Islamic conception of God belief in Eternal Love between Persons of the Godhead Itself, belief in His love to His creatures can hardly be said to obtain at all: at any rate it is wholly subordinate to the thought of mere arbitrary Power. Nor does it elicit from men the conception of love as their attitude towards Him. Blind, abject submission to God as All-Powerful is the essence of the Faith of Mohammed—submission to a Being Whose absolute Force controls the world at His mere caprice. And this, we may surely say, is exactly what we should expect where Allah is held to transcend His creatures by a cold,

blank gulf of distance which He could not, except by mere blasphemy, be thought to disregard and to span by taking them into union with Himself; still more when the Indivisibility of His Being is held to debar Him from having in Himself both Lover and Object of Love.

The other Theistic Faith, the Religion of Abraham and of the Prophets, dwelt ever on the Love of God, on His care for mankind and for individual men, as the pre-eminent moral article of its creed.

Now the Faith of Islam, passing by, or refusing, belief in the Love of God, and dwelling exclusively on His Power, sprang forth as the determined foe of the Gospel. While the Hebrew belief, with its stress on His Love, formed the matrix out of which there came forth to the world the human Embodiment of the Love of God, "the Christ Who" is Christianity, "the Christianity which is nothing else but Christ". Then belief in Christ as the Son of God necessitated belief in God as Triune to account for the Love of the Incarnation. Christ Himself, His Person, His Work, His Church, though the sons of Abraham acknowledge us not, form that which to us, His adorers, is the natural, the inevitable complement of the faith of Abraham their father.

Whether, then, it is possible or not to believe in God as Love without believing in Him as subsisting in Three Persons, it is, at any rate, fact of history that the Theism which adored His Love gave birth to the Faith which believes Him Three; while that which believes in Power alone regarded war upon belief in the Trinity as part of its mission to the world.

CHAPTER II.

THE PRACTICAL VALUE OF BELIEF IN THE HOLY TRINITY.

IF anything of truth or of persuasiveness is to be found in the preceding chapter, the devotional worth of belief in the Holy Trinity needs no further direct enunciation.

It follows to bring out the *practical* value of belief in the Mystery of the Triune God.

First, then, in strictly general terms, of the relation of Doctrine to Practice. What is it exactly that we mean by Practice and by Doctrine respectively, when we use these familiar terms in a context such as the present?

The scope of Christian practice can include nothing less than this—the entire adjustment of conduct to the facts by which we are surrounded. The first and chief of those facts is, undoubtedly, the fact of God. The second is the fact of man. The third is the fact of the world in which we have been placed by God, and in which we are in contact with man. And our practical relations to each, our adjustment of our standing towards them, must depend on our apprehension of what they are.

To attain right relations with God, we must approach Him as He actually is—so far as it is possible

to man to apprehend this most primary of Facts. And next, right relations with men must depend to an incalculable extent on our knowing what they, like ourselves, ought to be in relation to God. And, again, it may possibly be found in the development of all that is to follow, that our whole conceptions of the Universe of which our own world forms a part, depend at every turn on our beliefs about the Being Who made it, and by Whom it is ruled and sustained. Wrong conceptions of Him and of His Nature are responsible, in the last resort, for the most hideous aberrations of practice which alienate rational creatures from their Father in Heaven and from each other.

All this will be dealt with at length in the course of the chapters which follow. Suffice it to indicate here that practice in its fullest sense must be based on, indeed must include as an essential part of itself, not a little of belief about God—belief which in our ordinary parlance we speak of as Christian Doctrine.

For what, in the next place, is Doctrine? It is nothing more nor less than the statement, in authoritative terms, of facts of a certain order. Every Doctrine represents a fact, is a way of stating a fact; only a fact not cognizable by man through his own unassisted powers. A Doctrine, then, is nothing else than a fact about Almighty God made known to man by Revelation—a fact about God in Himself, or about God in His relations with His creatures, such as man could not have arrived at, were it not that “at sundry times and in divers manners God spake in time past by

the prophets," and has finally "spoken unto us by His Son" (Heb. I. 1).

Did we look upon Doctrine in general, and on Doctrine in its various authoritative statements, as simply a set of propositions, to be apprehended, or, without apprehension, to be received as true in the abstract, then certainly its relation to practice must always be shadowy and vague. Once grasp that it means facts about God, made known to us by God Himself, and it is plain that in many ways, and under many aspects, its apprehension is intensely practical.

And perhaps the most attractive aspect under which this its character can be set forth is the thought that God cares enough for men and for their personal relations with Himself to desire us to be cognizant of what He is in His innermost, essential Being—that He values His children sufficiently to make it an object to Him that we should know and understand His Nature, so far as it is possible for us to do so.

A man who had been wonderfully helpful to all the boys whom he knew was asked by one who had watched him, and had seen how he was loved by them and loved them, wherein lay the wonderful influence by which he had drawn them to himself. He replied that he had mechanical tastes, and was always at work with his lathe, and that he had the boys into his workshop, invited them to help him in his work, and "talked to them about the things that interested himself". The explanation was as perfect as it was *naïve*. He honoured them by taking for granted that the things which interested himself, about which he really

cared, would appeal to them just for that reason : that there subsisted a mutual understanding between a cultured man and simple boys, just because they cared for one another. And this formed a perfect appeal to the mind of the younger and less cultivated—his senior cared enough about him to wish him to understand, and to enter into, the things which interested himself. The desire to be sympathized with and understood took off all stooping on one side, and all fear of patronage on the other, and so the understanding was established, and the blessed influence followed.

Revelation of Himself by our Father has something of just this character. He longs to be understood by His creature, to come into relations with man, as an object of satisfaction to Himself, not merely of condescension to us.

Response to Love such as this is surely a most practical matter. Its absence must also be practical. We must be much more perfect beings for having trained ourselves to understand, and to respond to it ; must be much less perfect beings if it fail to elevate and to move us. In the human instance just quoted, it formed a most important factor in the development of the boys concerned. By finding on the part of their senior a desire for their sympathy and affection, they learnt to love him more because they understood him better. To know God as far as we can is to gain new reasons for loving Him—the supreme end and aim of all practice.

But, again, our relations with God include as their most notable characteristic certain acts on the part of

our Father, of which we are called to avail ourselves. And these, we are taught, must depend, for the efficacy of all that they involve, upon response on the part of His children. But our very ability to respond to them depends on our knowing God as Three and yet as One. For they are in very large measure the acts of the Son and the Holy Ghost.

Nay, one meaning of the Doctrine of the Trinity is simply that the Bible has told us that the Son and the Spirit are Divine ; that all that is said by our Lord, and all that is taken up by the Apostles, about the Son as redeeming the world, and about the Spirit as sanctifying the elect, depend in the last resort upon one grand fact in the Godhead ; namely, that God is not only related to us under three special aspects of His Character, but that He is Son, Redeemer, Word, that He is Holy Spirit, Sanctifier, as well as Father in Heaven, and this from all Eternity ; that what He does is the outcome of what He is ; that every act of His, in Creation, Redemption, Sanctification, represents, indeed, we might say, depends on, His being essentially in Himself, not Power and not Holiness only, but Wisdom and Love, from Eternity. To take advantage in any real sense of that which He offers for our acceptance, we must realize, must believe in our hearts, that His Own Essential Nature determines His treatment of ourselves ; that He were not that very Being to Whom we can give ourselves up, to be saved, to be sanctified, to be glorified, if He were not—what He tells us that He is—Eternally and Personally Wisdom and Love.

That belief in the Triunity of God is thus before all things a practical matter, is essentially the position of the Church of England. For it is just in its bearing on practice that it is put into the mouths of her children in their earliest instructions in the Faith.

"What dost thou chiefly learn in these Articles of thy Belief?" the catechist is to ask of the child. And the answer deals exclusively with our practical relations to God as Father, Son, and Holy Ghost: "First, I learn to believe in God the Father, Who hath made me, and all the world. Secondly, in God the Son, Who hath redeemed me, and all mankind. Thirdly, in God the Holy Ghost, Who sanctifieth me, and all the elect people of God."

Now, Creation, Redemption and Sanctification are certainly not mere abstractions. They are facts of the most practical kind, on which all right conduct is founded. A child rightly taught in the Catechism can never regard this belief in the light of the acceptance of a theory, to guide the understanding aright. He must receive it as a spiritual basis for practical relations with God. But it carries these vital relations right back out of the realm of the visible, and founds them on the Nature of God Himself.

No better way could be found for bringing out the profound practicality of belief in the Triune God than by expanding this primary teaching about our relations with Him, as corresponding to the Facts of His Being.

And, first, let it be noted here, as it will be throughout this whole volume, that we were not taught in our

Catechism that One Divine Being, with nothing of veritable Threeness in His Own Essential Nature, has dealt with us in three distinct ways, and that therefore we must think of that One under three distinct aspects or characters. Such teaching would come short of the truth and of the Church's presentation of it. We were taught to believe in Three Persons—were taught in other words that the threefold relations of creatures to God depend on the Threefold Nature of the Being with Whom they obtain.

We must not therefore approach it as though our belief in that Threefold Nature formed only an imaginative description of facts concerning ourselves. On the contrary, it embodies, so far as may be, objective and Eternal facts, independent altogether of humanity and of man's relations with God. This is why it is plainly laid down in that earliest account of our Faith that we learn to believe in Three Persons within the One Divine Nature.

For though it were a wild perversion of the truth to say that we believe in Three Gods, it were a hardly less fatal mutilation of the Faith to stop short with affirming a threefold relation to which the One God has admitted us. We are bound to go farther than this, to say that the threefold relation into which He condescends to admit us depends for its reality and its blessedness on His being Himself Three in One.

So far these general considerations have been confined to the gain to ourselves which may come from our accepting as of faith a mystery which we

cannot understand. But another point must be dealt with before going more into detail, and expounding the practical value of belief in the Son and the Holy Ghost as Eternally equal with the Father. There is a practical aspect of belief which has nothing to do with gain to ourselves, which is simply concerned with our duty to God. An absolute surrender of self into the Hands of our Creator and Lord is the one and only position which a creature has a right to adopt. And this surrender of self must remain incomplete, indeed mutilated, if, while will and affections are surrendered, the understanding be not offered up as a part of our reasonable sacrifice.

But if the sacrifice thus required is to be offered with any completeness, a confession of total inability to comprehend our God as He is must stand in the foremost place as its first, all-important constituent. "Verily Thou art a God that hidest Thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour" (Is. XLV. 15) must be the language of every heart that has truly submitted itself to Him. His Being must be "dark with excess of light" when He stoops to relations with finite beings. A Doctrine of God comprehensible by man, with no mystery shrouding it around, were necessarily an inadequate doctrine. All finite beliefs about an Infinite Being must come short of what He is in Himself. But a belief which was wholly comprehensible to ourselves would come short not only of His Nature Itself, but of what man, under the guidance of Revelation, is capable of learning about it. One of the ways in which "we are greater than we know"

is our ability to grasp by Faith some facts about God which we cannot understand : for, to "know the Love of God" as fully as man can do, we must know it as a "Love that passeth knowledge" (Eph. iii. 19). And if this, His treatment of ourselves, must surpass our practical understanding, how much more that Nature Itself, of which His Love to us is only a single manifestation.

How complete the sacrifice must be when we acknowledge that we cannot comprehend Him, has never been more gloriously set forth than in the oft-quoted words of our own Richard Hooker :—

"Dangerous it were for the feeble brain of man to wade far into the doings of the Most High ; Whom although to know be life, and joy to make mention of His Name ; yet our soundest knowledge is to know that we know Him not as indeed He is, neither can know Him : and our safest eloquence concerning Him is our silence, when we confess without confession that His glory is inexplicable, His greatness above our capacity and reach. He is above, and we upon earth ; therefore it behoveth our words to be wary and few.

"Our God is One, or rather very Oneness, and mere Unity, having nothing but Itself in Itself, and not consisting (as all things do besides God) of many things. In which Essential Unity of God a Trinity Personal nevertheless subsisteth, after a manner far exceeding the possibility of man's conceit. The works which outwardly are of God, they are in such sort of Him being One, that each Person hath in them somewhat peculiar and proper. For being Three, and They all

subsisting in the Essence of One Deity ; from the Father, by the Son, through the Spirit all things are. That which the Son doth hear of the Father, and which the Spirit doth receive of the Father and the Son, the same we have at the hands of the Spirit as being the last, and therefore the nearest unto us in order, although in power the same with the second and the first."

Now these words of one of the greatest of thinkers about God and the things of God bring out two distinct propositions ; first, that all our conceptions of God must be qualified by the humble admission that they are those of imperfect beings who cannot conceive of Him as He is ; but, second, more particularly than this, that under one well-defined aspect His Existence presents to our minds a problem of special complexity.

"In the Essential Unity of God, a Trinity Personal nevertheless subsisteth after a manner far exceeding the possibility of man's conceit"—to say this is to make a tremendous admission. For the words express facts about God in terms of that very department of thought where reality is wont to be most plain and self-evident ; and yet they require us to admit that, in that very department, the truth about God Almighty transcends our ken completely—so completely that terms of numerical quantity, in which we are fain to express it, form naught but a mere approximation to fact. We associate them with the plainest, most accentuated distinctions ; we are using them to embody Eternal Facts about which such

distinctions surpass our comprehension ; and yet we are asked to believe that the distinctions which sound so strangely contradictory come nearer the Facts than aught else that we could state of them.

A completer surrender of the claim of man to make himself "the measure of all things," it were simply impossible to imagine. For here we are called on to admit that the Self-Revelation of God makes it known that a Region exists, within which our human conceptions are found to be completely at fault ; and at fault in that field of their exercise where we supposed that their decisions were infallible. When we wish to describe the most complete of demonstrations, leaving open no possible appeal, we speak of mathematical certainty ; because we are fundamentally unable, by the laws of our mental being, to understand how anything whatever can be exempt from the defined conditions, the sharp inclusions and exclusions, which we associate with numerical quantity. That one is one and that three is three, and that by no intellectual subtilty can oneness and threeness be mutually reconciled, is for us, in the finite realm, a proposition absolutely self-evident. Indeed we ascribe to it a finality and a certainty which belong to nothing else in the Universe. It is a law, we are inclined to say, not only of thought but of existence. Not only could we never conceive of things otherwise : we are at any rate disposed to believe that they could not exist under other conditions, and that it is nonsense to suggest that they could.

Yet the Doctrine of the Three in One requires,

before we can receive it, that we abandon once and for all this claim to reduce all possible being under the laws of our own understanding. It affirms the existence of a region where our necessary human certainties as to number and numerical relations shade off into metaphorical expressions for indicating ultimate facts ; because those ultimate facts themselves transcend the limited conceptions within which our certainties hold good.¹

But in what sense, it may be asked, is it a practical matter, what bearing has it on practice that we should be asked to accept this position?

We are not to suppose for a moment that Christ, or the Church which represents Him, would make a demand such as this on the allegiance of the human understanding, as something to be enforced for its own sake, nor only for the sake of the disciplinary results which its acceptance might prove to effect. It is not in this sense alone that they have practical bearings on life.

It is true that, once they are made, it becomes part of our practical duty to fall in with the utmost that they exact. But there is one all-important reason which accounts for their having been made, and apart from which they would never have been made : it is that the practical needs of sinful, penitent men have led them, from the first days till now, to an instinctive

¹ The fuller treatment demanded by this subject will be found in the detached note at the end of the chapter. Its further elaboration here might overload the text for some of our readers. Mansel's Bampton Lectures are the great authority for this aspect of the truth.

spiritual sense that they require, for pardon and peace, to approach our Lord Jesus Christ as a Mediator bringing us to God ; and that He could not be regarded as such if He were, or if we thought of Him as being, but a Man among other men.

Than this no other consideration could possibly be more practical. And it is as bearing on practice in this and no other sense that they have ever formed part of the Creed of the Church—whether the Creed, or body of practical belief, so slightly shadowed forth in St. Peter's speech on the Day of Pentecost itself, or the Creed which we call the "*Quicumque vult*," which contains the matured reflections of the Church on that very same body of truth.

A fuller statement on this subject will be found in chapters v., ix., and xii., on the doctrinal statements contained in the New Testament. Indeed, every page of this book is steeped through and through with the same thought. But it has certain special bearings which require to be dealt with here. For the effort to follow these truths in their historical and doctrinal aspects will only be made by the reader so far as his mind is convinced that they are essential to belief in Christ and His Salvation ; or perhaps it might rather be said, so far as their truth is implicitly assumed in acceptance of Him as a Saviour from sin.

Perhaps then the completest vindication of the practical value of the Doctrine, as regards its impression on ourselves, is to be found in the part that it has played in producing the triumphs of the Gospel in the hearts and lives of men. It is true, as has been said

in thousands of sermons, that faith in the Divinity of Christ has formed an essential constituent in the peace which His Sacrifice brings. We need not try to account for it : the fact stands out undeniable, however we may attempt—or decline to attempt—to embody its reasons in a theory. Belief in His power to save depends on belief in His Person, on His being what the Church has declared Him to be, Very God in Human Form. Nor, again, is it a whit less certain that belief in the Divinity of the Spirit has been associated with that in the God-Man wherever the Faith has prevailed in its most compelling form.

The constituents of a Faith such as this have ever been as follows :—(1) belief in the power of the Atoning Blood to effect a complete separation between the penitent and the sins which he deplores ; (2) the sense of the compelling force attaching to a new supreme motive ; (3) the inspiration of a perfect Example ; (4) the sustaining power of a Divine strength, assimilated, it is true, by voluntary acts, but essentially communicated from above. Now each one of these has, as matter of fact, been found, in universal experience, to depend on belief in the Son and the Spirit as Personal and as Divine.

First, belief in an Atoning Sacrifice has been expressed in many forms, some sane, consistent, beautiful ; some wild, inconsistent with the balance of the Faith ; some even horrible and repellent. But even in unlovely forms it has been found to bring peace and satisfaction to tried and tormented souls.

But it is not the least striking fact about this belief in a Sacrifice for sin, that whatever form it has taken in the minds of those who have held it, the burdened conscience of man has clung to the thought of a Sacrifice offered to God by One Who is Divine Himself in the fullest sense of the word. Its craving for restoration has demanded that He through Whom it is met should Himself be equal with God. That God "had set Himself to Satan" (Browning, *Gismond*) as the champion of the human race, has been that to which men have clung to assure themselves that the victory has been won.

The sense of absolute safety and rest which alone can start us fair on our unequal contest with evil has come from the belief, however expressed, that it is Very God Himself Who has stooped to undertake our cause. Through Him and through Him alone, can we believe that Atonement is effected; because in Him alone do we find the needed "Daysman Who can lay His Hand upon both," being One with God Who receives, as with man who needs, the Offering. No belief but this has availed, nor could any other have availed, to inspire this absolute confidence as the basis of Christian practice.

All this goes far to account for the passionate stress which has been laid on the truth of the Divinity of Christ. Alike in the thoughts of individual men, working out the grounds of our belief, and in the corporate decisions of the Church, confirming or modifying those thoughts, it has ever been the sense of need, reaching out for assurance and trust, which has given

both substance and form to the Doctrine of His Two-fold Nature.

Next, that which has furnished the motive of motives for a new and higher life is the penitent realization of the cost at which we were redeemed. In every age of belief the question of grateful hearts has been "what shall I render unto the Lord for all the benefits that He hath done unto me?" But only to those who have believed in an Atonement wrought out by God suffering for us, has the answer come out in full. Such serve Him because they cannot help doing so. The meaning of duty for them is that He must be served for His Own Sake alone, as the only return that the creature can make to Him for stooping from Heaven to the Cross. To such, indeed, service is raised to a plane far above mere duty. For by them alone can it be realized that there can be no limit, no stint, to what must be done or endured for the Sake of their Crucified God—beyond doubt, of all conceptions which the world has ever known, the most practical for securing devoted service.

Third, the inspiration of a Perfect Example can only be received in full by those to whom that Example is a Self-revelation of God displayed upon earth as Man. Other teachers might have used His words in some moment of holy boldness, and bidden us to be "perfect as your Father Which is in Heaven is Perfect" (St. Matt. v. 48). But to Him alone it belongs to translate the Perfections of God into their adequate human equivalent, and to set them before us in actual life. That man was made in the Image of God was a

truth well known before He came. But what that Image was, how man could embody in flesh the sinless Holiness, the glorious Beauty, of Him, the Invisible God, could only be shown to the world by "the chiefest among ten thousand," "the altogether lovely" (Cant. v. 10, 16). When the awed curiosity of childhood or the way-worn doubts of eld make inquiry, What is God like? the believing Christian can reply that God in His moral Being is exactly like Jesus Christ, because He is God-made-Man.

And if three of the cardinal points in the triumph of Christian practice thus depend on belief in the Godhead of Christ, the fourth had never been effected apart from faith in the Godhead of the Spirit. To belief in a final escape from sin, with all its power to condemn and degrade, to the crowning motive of gratitude for Redemption, to the Inspiration of a perfect Example, there is added as the master-touch, the consciousness of might in the inner man, conferred by the dwelling of God in the heart. And this as a practical spring of power we find to depend on the doctrinal truth that the Spirit Who spake by the Prophets is worshipped and glorified with the Father and the Son.

NOTE.

It is as true of the things of Heaven as it is of the things of earth, that to conceive of number and quantity as not applying to them, as they apply in our own lower sphere, is impossible to the human understanding. That One should be Three and that Three should be One sounds just as complete a contradiction when asserted of God Almighty, as it

does in any other context. But need we go farther than this? Need we say of our thoughts about Him that they, with their human limitations, unable to escape from the sharp affirmations and exclusions which characterize numerical distinctions, must still be the measure of all things? Oneness and threeness are mutually exclusive in the region of finite thinking—so absolutely exclusive, indeed, that no one can challenge the assertion that within the sphere of our knowledge, the distinction appears at least to be inherent in the nature of things, not only in our apprehension of them. Be this conceded to the full. But does this necessarily mean there can be no other sphere in which numerical distinctions, with the sharp, compelling power which they exercise in the region of the finite, do not obtain as they do with us? Or may we hold that in the Region of the Infinite, relations may possibly obtain, undefinable in terms of number—that while we cannot escape from numerical ideas when we think of the things of God, their description in terms of number forms only an approximation to what they are in themselves, while their exhaustive definition is impossible—that while we cannot conceive or apprehend how such things can possibly be, we should wholly decline to go farther, to assume that the capabilities of human apprehension are conterminous with those of Divine Existence? What such a position involves is our admitting that beyond our human comprehension, there may lie a Realm of Being not intelligible to creatures such as we are, yet whose ultimate, Eternal Facts are shadowed forth to us, as far as may be, by expressions borrowed from the realm of the finite, conditioned as it is by number and quantity. If such a Region there be, then it is plain that a description of its Facts under any numerical terms can form but a broken approximation to Essential, Eternal Truth. We cannot divest ourselves, it is true, of the distinctions, the mutual

exclusions, which belong to numerical terms ; while yet these terms may approximate to Fact, as no other terms could do ; may convey to us such glimpses of Fact as human understanding can catch ; still but shadowing forth some transcendent truth whose full substance lies out of sight.

To accept a conclusion such as this is to admit that our human faculties are limited in a way, and to a degree, which we are loth to believe that they can be ; that our lordship in the world of the finite is given us on terms which we fain would evade—on our acknowledging that we depend on a Suzerain Power Whose Dwelling transcends our limited realm by a difference, not of degree, but of kind. If there be a God above us, and if He has revealed Himself to man, it would seem to follow of necessity that His gracious unveiling of Himself must include a demand on our allegiance, requiring even this abnegation of ourselves as a condition of its loyal reception.

That the Self-unveiling of God in Christ has been rightly held by the Church to demand such an act on our part, it is the object of the following chapters to draw out so far as may be. And if it has been rightly understood to include so tremendous a claim, it must be a most practical matter that we should humble ourselves to its admission.

CHAPTER III.

WHAT BELIEF IN THE HOLY TRINITY IS NOT.

WHAT exactly, then, is that belief, upon which so much depends? It were well to set out on the answer by first stating what it is not. And to this the present chapter shall be devoted.

First, belief in the Doctrine of the Trinity is not belief in three gods, as some have asserted that it is. No Christian so believes, or ever has so believed, if he had even a rudimentary understanding of the Faith which he professed to hold. If he did, he would cease to be a Christian. Belief in the Unity of God is the basis of all our beliefs; for the truth of the Triunity of God assumes the truth of His Unity—is based, indeed, upon it. And, indeed, it not only assumes, but safeguards it.

In the Christian sense of the word GOD, His Unity is a truth of necessity, besides being a truth of Revelation. To say that there are more gods than one, in the Christian sense of the word GOD, is nothing less than a contradiction in terms. And this for at least three reasons. For God, as a Christian knows Him, is, first, the Unoriginated Origin of all things, the First Cause of all that exists; and to speak of more than one First Cause were to use words without any meaning. And, second, when we use the word GOD,

Omnipotence is necessarily included as a part of its connotation. And, third, no use of the word which did not include Self-existence, in a sense entirely unique, and admitting of no second being, could be thought of as conveying in the least the Christian sense of Godhead. For this last single reason by itself it were to every instructed Christian a sheer contradiction in terms to say that there could be three gods.

It is necessary to state in more detail these three conclusive reasons for saying that to every Christian it were a contradiction in terms to say that there are more gods than one. But, before proceeding to do so, we may briefly recall to ourselves how belief in the Unity of God is a primary truth of Revelation: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord thy God, the Lord, is One" (Deut. vi. 4). The precept comes from the Pentateuch, and was expressly repeated by our Lord, in a passage of crucial importance. He was asked by a lawyer in the Temple to define the relative importance of the old commandments of God. He enunciated Love to God as the first and greatest commandment, laid down under the older Dispensation, and He begins His quotation of the passage with the words, "Hear, O Israel, the Lord thy God, the Lord, is One" (St. Mark xii. 29). In other words, He bases God's claim to be loved, as none other ought to be loved, upon the primary fact of His Unity. God's absolute Unity, then, is a truth of direct Revelation, and has in the scheme of Revelation a special place assigned it as the basis of the first obligation which a child can owe to his Father, the obligation of love.

And now to treat in more detail the reasons given above, why every intelligent Christian must feel it a contradiction in terms "to say there be three Gods or three Lords".

First to every one instructed in the Faith, the word GOD connotes of necessity the idea of the First Cause of all things ; of the One Unoriginate Being Who created all else that exists ; without Whom naught else that exists could have come into being at all, or could now be sustained in existence.

Some have held, and it may possibly be true, that the existence of such a First Cause is a necessary truth of all thought. This need not be argued here. The point which at present concerns us is that if there exist such a Being as a Christian means by GOD there cannot be more than One such : that when we use the word GOD and when we think the thought that underlies it, we mean that He is the First Cause. And there cannot be three First Causes—or, indeed, two.

This truth will come out most clearly by resorting to a *reductio ad absurdum*—by showing the absurdity which follows if we try to conceive of its opposite.

Assume, then,* that there can be two First Causes, and the following absurdities follow. Either all things originated from one of them—and then the other is not a First Cause ; or else some things originated from one of them, and some from the other—and then neither of them is a First Cause. And, again, either one of them took His origin from the other, and is therefore not a First Cause ; or else neither of them originated from the other, and thus, again, there is no

First Cause at all ; because each of the two assumed First Causes stands side-by-side with the other, with a being whom he did not originate.

Again, when we speak about God, the essential connotation of the word includes Omnipotence within its scope. This idea may be complicated for us by the fact of evil existing. But complicated be it or simple, at any rate we actually hold it, and we think of it as necessarily connoted whenever we use the word GOD. And there cannot be two Omnipotent Beings. For either one of them must be controlled by the other, or each of them must be independent of the other, or they must mutually control one another. And a being subject to any of these conditions is not Omnipotent at all. For, confessedly, there is another being whom he could not control if he would. And confessedly there is another being by whom he is in some sense controlled. While, to be controlled by anything else, or to be unable to control something else, is to be Omnipotent in no sense whatever.

But besides First Cause, and besides Omnipotence, the word GOD connotes by its very use the idea of Eternal Self-existence : " I AM " is the Name of our GOD (Ex. III. 4). And the attribute of Eternal Self-existence can only belong to One Being. We shall find that there is even a sense in which none but the First Person of the Trinity can be spoken of as Unoriginate ; that the Christian definition of God as being Three in One has to be guarded in this direction from seeming to imply three gods ; that Self-existence without origination belongs to the Father

alone; that all that we say and believe on the mysterious Triunity of the Godhead requires to be, and has been so, defined by every Catholic writer as to insure that it does not become Tritheism. But this must be dealt with hereafter (ch. xiv.). Suffice it to say for the moment that dependence, or contingency, and Self-existence are two incompatible thoughts, and that Christians are not so illogical as to forget this necessary distinction. But if we believed in three gods we should be forgetting the distinction. For Unoriginated Self-existence is nothing if not unique: to multiply it in thought were to contradict it.

It follows accordingly that to use the word GOD, or to think the thought GOD, about three different Beings, has never been the use of the Church, nor of any one who believed in her teaching as contained in the Catholic Creeds.

All this may appear to some readers too obvious to need elaboration. Yet as long as the fact remains that Christians are taunted not seldom with believing in more than One God, it is advisable to show the absurdities which follow from any such thought.

But to approach this charge of Tritheism from another point of view—it would not be untrue to say that the statement of the Unity of God, as contained in the Book of Deuteronomy, is practically an identical proposition. That God is One and that the ONE is God would be two forms of expression conveying almost the same meaning. For God is the Being Whose Nature is such that if He were not the One—if there could be any other such as He—then He were

not Himself, as we know Him to be, but were something totally different, that He were not in any one point what we mean when we call Him God.

The people to Whom He revealed Himself as "I AM," as Self-existent, were a rude, untutored folk : they lived in the midst of polytheists, of a highly-organized Egyptian religion which rested on the total denial of the Unity of God, the Supreme. And so the enunciation of the truth may almost be said to have come to them as a caution against using the word GOD in any such degraded sense as it bore in the mouths of their neighbours : as a warning that none of the beings on whom the Egyptians bestowed it could be thought of as being Divinities in the sense which the word was to bear in the mouth of the Chosen Race.

For all these reasons, then, to believe in the Trinity of the Godhead is not to believe in three Gods. It is to believe in facts about the One God, or rather in facts *in* the One God, Whose groundwork, Whose claim to be believed, is based on His Unity itself.

But, second, to believe in the Holy Trinity is not merely to think of our God as revealed under three distinct characters ; as manifesting Himself to us, His creatures, under three great leading aspects. When we are asked what we chiefly learn in the articles of the Christian Faith, the answer goes far beyond this. We are not taught to reply that God so loves and condescends to us that it is lawful to call Him a Father : nor yet that Christ may be called God's Son, and ourselves may be adopted as such, because He so lived in

this world as to embody the perfect conception of a Son representing his Father, and because He introduced this filial relation as that which becomes all Christians : nor, again, that God so abides in our hearts as to resemble the breath that we draw, and that He may therefore be called Holy Spirit. On the contrary, we are taught to reply that we believe in the Father Who created, in the Son Who has redeemed, and in the Spirit Who sanctifies us—which is to say that we are so to think about each, and so to bear ourselves towards each, of the Three Blessed Persons named, as implies that each of the Three has special relations to ourselves which can only be described as being personal.

And although this formula of belief is put in a practical shape, as everything must be put when the mind to be appealed to is a child's, the embodiment actually given to it is such as must impress on the child that all that God is in practice to us, to all the baptized and, indeed, to all Creation, is only the outward expression of something which He is in Himself, essentially, from all Eternity, and just because He is GOD. To pass for a single moment from the strictly non-technical language which belongs to these opening chapters, and to adopt theological terms, we are taught from our earliest childhood that the Economic Triunity of God, His manifestation of Himself as appealing to us in three characters, depends on His essential Triunity ; that it assumes and, indeed, is conditioned by His being in Himself Three in One. To believe aught else but this were in the eyes of all Catholic Christians derogatory to the Absolute Perfection which we hold to

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belong to Him as God. For all that He manifests Himself as being, all that He is to us, and all that He makes Himself to us, belongs to the Perfection of His Nature, is the outcome—we may say with all reverence, the necessary, inevitable outcome—of His Perfection, of His being our God.

So far, then, of what belief in the Holy Trinity is not. It is not belief in three Gods—in technical terms, it is not Tritheism.

Nor is it only belief in three characters, three sides of His Own Perfection, under which He variously reveals Himself according to the needs of His creatures, and according to the aspect of His Nature to which He would call our attention. To put this last in technical terms, belief in the Trinity of God is no mere Sabellian belief in One God revealed in three ways, and accordingly called by three Names.

CHAPTER IV.

WHAT BELIEF IN THE HOLY TRINITY IS.

WE have seen what belief in the Holy Trinity is not—that it is not belief in three Gods, and that it is not a mere belief in three revelations of the One God. We must next go on to ask what it is on its positive side. And this must first be discussed in non-theological language, apart from the technicalities of the Schools, in language which appeals to the heart, language rather of natural piety than of definite, dogmatic theology. If it is first set forth in such terms, to appeal to what is best in our affections, the technical definitions which follow will come home with far more force.

In language such as this, belief in the Trinity of the Godhead means simply thinking of God as eternally and necessarily Perfect—with all the essential perfections associated with the highest humanity, only raised into the plane of Infinity.

But this statement demands explanation. Does it mean that Christian teaching lies open to the bitter taunt so often hurled against faith—whether Christian faith or not—that “man creates God in his own image”?

Be it here admitted from the first, though admitted with due qualification, that if we do not think of God under images derived from man, we cannot think of

Him at all : that all man's beliefs about God must be, in a sense, anthropomorphic. But this, for our purpose at least, does not mean that we create for ourselves a conception of a being like ourselves. What it certainly does mean is this—that God reveals Himself to man under images derived from man. Or, to go a little deeper than this, it means, as it has been well put, not so much that our conceptions of God are anthropomorphic, as that God made man theomorphic—that He made us so like Himself that what we know and believe about Him is not less true but more true for being based on human analogies, and couched in anthropomorphic expressions.

And indeed we might ask as the next step—how else were it possible or conceivable that God should reveal Himself at all? We must know Him, if we ever are to know Him, through language, conceptions, ideas which can but approximate distantly to all that He is in Himself. For us to know the Infinite exactly as He is in Himself were for the finite to cease to be finite, to expand to equality with the Infinite. Adumbrations, approaches, approximations are the most that we can hope to attain to as we reach after knowledge of God. And these approximations, it would seem, must be made through humanity or not at all. The highest that we actually know is what must furnish faint adumbrations of that which we never shall know as it *actually* is in itself. And the highest that we actually know, or ever shall in this world know, is undoubtedly man, human nature, made after the image of God.

Through this some knowledge is possible ; for like is apprehended by like. As far as we resemble the Creator, so far we may come to apprehend Him. I am not speaking now of that moral, that spiritual, apprehension which comes in increasing measure to those who have assimilated themselves to Him by dwelling on, and by copying, His Holiness. The resemblance now in question is that which belongs to us by nature, without any effort on our part—the resemblance which we have in our minds when we say that the God in Whom we believe must be thought of as a Personal Being, and not as blind force or fate, and that therefore we ourselves have more in common with Him than with the unconscious powers of nature : that when we think of God we assume as Attributes of His Being a conscious, continuous Existence ; to which our own existence as we think, and feel, and will, and love, is related as shadows are related to substance.

Assuming all this as a starting-point—as, indeed, it is the only starting-point allowed us by our own limitations—God reveals Himself to man under similitudes taken from humanity.

That such Revelation is possible must be assumed for the purposes of this book. The question now to be dealt with is not the existence of God, nor yet the possibility to man of knowing Him if He exists. These questions are not theological in the sense in which we use the word. They belong to the department of Apologetics, to the study of the Evidences of Religion ; while the aim of the present treatise is essentially and exclusively theological. It is written for

those who believe, no matter how they came to believe it, that God exists, and has revealed Himself.

Once granted, then, that God exists, and that man can know Him and think of Him, we find ourselves thinking about Him—are, indeed, shut up to doing so—under figures, analogies, adumbrations, which are based, and can only be based, upon the highest that we know about man.

And from this the next step follows—if we think of God at all, and think of Him under human similitudes, then it follows that man must conceive of Him as Perfect with every perfection which belongs to humanity at its highest. And these must belong to Him eternally, as essential to His very Existence. To think of Him otherwise than this were to make Him inferior to ourselves.

Now when we think of man at his highest, it is plain that there are three qualifications which stand out before all others as essential to his proper perfection—power, wisdom, and love—forceful character, expansive intelligence, tender affection. Take a man who is lacking in these, or in any one of these, and we think of him as coming far short of what man at his highest can be. But take one who exerts over others the spell of an overmastering personality, whom others trust and follow, submitting themselves instinctively and gladly to a forcefulness in him which compels them. Add to this a keen intelligence, which grasps the principles of things, and remembers and deals with their details; which sees where principles lead, and can apply them to practical matters; which not only

theorizes about anything but can apply and carry out in life what has first been conceived within. Combine with these two gifts a loving, tender affection, embracing and drawing to itself the humanity with which it is in contact ; let it expand through its immediate surroundings to include in the scope of its affections all beings who need, and who depend on it. And then, and only then, in the combination of these characteristics, power, wisdom, and love, we recognize in the highest degree what humanity is capable of being. Let any of the three be absent, or be but imperfectly present, and neither can force of character, combined with genius at its highest, appeal to us as ideally great ; nor can the grasp of powerful intelligence, combined with tender affection, impress us as really commanding, apart from force of character ; nor yet can strong will and affection command our perfect respect if intelligence be not found with them.

Think of God, then, under human similitudes, as alone we are able to think of Him, and we find ourselves absolutely shut up to attributing to Him in His Perfection a Power to which all human forcefulness will appear but as weakness and impotence, a Wisdom, before which our understanding must shrink into ignorance and foolishness, a Love, compared with which our deepest, most affectionate tenderness will be cold and poor and inadequate.

But not only will these three Attributes present themselves instinctively to us as necessarily belonging to God. Reflection seems further to show that if we are to think of Him as Perfect we can never dissociate

them from Him, can never conceive of Him as subsisting except with these three Attributes. They must be His, then, essentially and from Eternity. To conceive of Him as possibly without them, as capable of being without them, is at once to degrade our ideas of Him.

But if our conceptions of God, to be worthy of all that He is, or to approach as nearly to being worthy as human ideas of Him can do, must include within their scope perfect Power, perfect Wisdom, perfect Love, then at once we are led to the conclusion that there must have existed from Eternity some Object whereon they could be exercised. Or at least that His Wisdom and His Love must from Eternity have found such Objects.

For we cannot conceive of Love apart from an Object to be loved, and we cannot conceive of Wisdom without some Object for its exercise. We can think of Power, it is true, apart from its actual exercise. And therefore an Omnipotent Being existing in solitary Majesty, possessed of Infinite Power, eternally capable of its exercise, though never putting it forth, could be thought of as no less Powerful for being thus solitarily grand : so that if our conceptions of Him need include but this one Attribute, we should not be necessarily led on to believe that within His Own Being there must be Eternal distinctions—in theological language, PERSONS—within Whose Self-conscious Life, relations analogous to our own subsist and are actually exercised. Whereas, let Wisdom and Love be predicated of Him from Eternity, and at once we are compelled to believe that the Eternal Existence of the Godhead must in-

clude within Itself the possibility, or rather the actuality, of such relations as these. Or perhaps it were truer to say that it must include within itself what we cannot otherwise formulate than by saying that relations such as these express our human conceptions of what it Divinely is.

But to think of Him as possibly existing in Power without actual Wisdom, or even in Power and Wisdom apart from actual Love, were a wholly unworthy idea of Him.

For to think of Him merely as Omnipotent were to stop with the first and the least worthy of the three perfections of humanity which I have said that we necessarily attribute to Him. Mere forcefulness without intelligence, mere will, apart from love, is the last and the least lovable conception which we form of a fellow-man. While the highest and the worthiest ideal that any of us can form about another is that which attributes to him love.

And hence, no doubt, it is that while we never are told in Scripture that God, as God, is Power ; while we never are taught by an Apostle that God, as God, is Wisdom, we find it laid down by St. John that " God IS LOVE " (1 Jn. iv. 8, etc.).

To think of God as unloving were to outrage our primary conceptions of all that He is to His creatures. But what, we must go on to inquire, were the effect on our thoughts about Him if we so far limited His Love as to believe that for its actual exercise He depended on having for its object some limited, creaturely being ? To do this were to think of our God as having existed

from Eternity with a bare potentiality of loving, but without any scope for its exercise.

Nor are we without opportunity of ascertaining the effect of such a thought of Him on the spirit and tone of the worshipper. The conception of power without love, of arbitrary, loveless Omnipotence, is the primary, nay the only, ideal adopted by Mohammed and his followers. For them, the Unity of the Godhead, standing forth in terrible isolation from any conception of love, is the single notion of God which dominates theology and religion. Islam has splendid strong points. But to study its historical developments, or to be in practical contact with its votaries, is to find that this loveless ideal forms a lurid object-lesson of what it is to be haters of falsehood without being dominated by truth in its highest, most spiritual aspects ; of what it is to loath idolatry, yet not to know God as He is. In absolute contrast to this stands out St. John's presentation of all that God is in Himself—summed up in the single axiom that "GOD IS LOVE". And if this one verse stood alone as constituting the Christian Revelation, it would lead, by an inevitable sequence, to the conception of Persons within the Godhead.

And here I would pause for a moment in developing this fascinating theme, to point out the special appeal which it ought, as I conceive of it, to make to the thought of our day. Activity, as distinguished from *inertia*, force, as against mere matter, is that which we are told to-day is to be found at the core of all things, as constituting their veritable essence.

The latest and deepest pronouncement of the

grandest scientific minds on the nature and constitution of the Universe is that matter in its innermost essence is no brute, passive thing, to be acted upon by force as something distinguishable from itself. On the contrary, activity, movement, the interaction of electron upon electron is, what constitutes material existence.

Thus all which we think of as matter, the something not ourselves which we know as extended and incompressible—what we thought of a short time ago as the ultimate, concrete fact with which we had to deal in the active life of practice and in the speculative life of thought—represents, when we conceive of it more adequately, but the centre of the many manifestations of the ceaseless, successive activity which presents itself to us as Force.

Stop here, conceive of Force as the essence of all that exists. Take the endless shock of the electrons, as constituting all that is, as including all things that are in a single, indistinguishable Existence, and the ultimate *dictum* of thought upon the deepest problems of existence would be, not, perhaps, God is Power (for this were to assume a God as having an actual existence) but, at any rate, Power is God, if a God, in any sense, there be. Power, at any rate, were the ultimate fact into which all others resolved themselves, and would usurp the name of God if we continued to use it at all. Activity, Force, that eternal flux whose working constitutes matter, would remain as the all-in-all, did we confine ourselves to that point of view which deals with the realm of the physical.

Pause here, I would put it once more, and the ultimate word about all things were the dreary, materialistic pronouncement that Force, Activity, Shock, the mechanical play of the electrons, apart from every conception of moral and spiritual life, were the all-in-all of Existence.

Christianity, approaching things essentially from the point of view of the Moral, presents to us as its ultimate reality, its last word on all things that are, a *dictum* having much of resemblance to this last word of Philosophy on the ultimate realities of the physical. It takes as its highest definition of the Nature of Him Whom it worships, an Activity—God is Love. It tells us to take as defining Him, if we wish to think adequately about Him, those marvellous words of St. John which define His very Existence as consisting in the spiritual activity which we know in ourselves as Love. The profoundest mind, perhaps which ever searched into Theology, the great St. Thomas Aquinas, defined the Deity thus :—"Deus est actus purus"—God is essential activity. He did but express in the language which belonged to Scholastic Theology what St. John had set down once for all, when he said that "GOD IS LOVE". No mere possibility of loving, not a Being Who can, or Who does, love, but actually LOVE itself—such is, before all things, our God.

Do we wish to think adequately of Him, as far as humanity can do so, then our first conception of His Being, our thought of what He actually is in His very innermost Essence must be based upon these pronouncements—that He is Love. That He is Love,

be it observed ; not simply that He is loving, or that He loves, but that Love is His very Self. That Love is in Him nothing temporal, a mere relation of His Being, called forth into actual working by His having some creature to love, but that it constitutes necessarily and eternally what most deeply and essentially He is : that without this He were not Himself : that His thus going forth from Himself, to realize Himself in Another, appeals to His creature man as being, on an Infinite scale, essentially the very same thing which we know as affection in ourselves. And this is what we mean when we call Him by His Name of Love.

But to predicate love of any being implies, by the very predication, that he lives no solitary life, but that he actually subsists in personal relations with one who is an object of Love. Much more, then, to affirm of the Almighty not only that He loves but that He is Love, is to assert that from all Eternity He has some Being as an Object of His Love. And this is to maintain of necessity that distinctions obtain within the Godhead. An Eternal Object of Love can be nothing less than Divine. For there cannot be two Eternals : to subsist from Eternity to Eternity is to be Divine, to be God. If therefore God is Love, and has an Eternal Object of affection, then, either there must be more than one God, or, God must have within Himself, essential, coeternal with His Being, both Lover and Beloved alike. For to think of Him as other than Love, to think of Him with nothing to love, were to predicate imperfection of the Perfect. While to think of

Him as having anything to love, subsisting externally to Himself, and subsisting from all Eternity, were to think of Him as other than God, the One, the Self-existent, the I AM. If, then, we think of Him as Perfect, as from all Eternity Love, the Object of His Love must be found within Himself. In a word, we must differentiate the Godhead into Persons eternally subsisting within the One Divine Nature.

Apart from technicalities of Theology, in language which appeals to the heart, belief in God as Triune means, therefore, before all else, belief in the fact of facts about that which He is in Himself, as the highest that man can conceive of, essential and eternal love.

It is not perhaps needful at this point to enlarge on the other consideration that Wisdom cannot be conceived of apart from an object for its exercise. Suffice it to indicate here that it is not left out of account.

NOTE ON THE WORD "TRINITY".

Belief in GOD as Three in One is as old as Christianity itself. This will be abundantly shown in the sequel. The word TRINITY (Latin, *Trinitas*, Greek, *Τριάς*) does not appear as a theological term till near the end of the second century. The first to make use of it was Theophilus, Bishop of Antioch, who wrote in the reign of Marcus Aurelius. In his book against the heathen objector, Autolycus (ii. 15), he uses the word TRIAS to signify that God subsists in Three Persons. Or rather he introduces it as a Name of God Himself because He subsists in Three Persons: for the word, though strictly abstract, and signifying nothing but Threeness, the fact of being Three, is always used in the concrete, as a Name of GOD Almighty, connoting the Eternal Fact

that His Being is essentially Threefold. The exact words of Theophilus are :—"the three days preceding the Creation of the luminaries are types of the Trinity, of God and His Word and His Wisdom".

It ought to be pointed out that Theophilus wrote in an age when controversies about the Incarnation and the Trinity had not yet secured that orthodox writers should use the Names and distinctions of the Three Adorable Persons in a thoroughly accurate fashion. An exact theologian, writing in a later age, would not, in such a context, have said "God and His Word and His Wisdom". He would have said, *the Father*, and not simply God ; lest he should be thought not to apply the Title, God, to the Son and the Spirit. Nor would he have spoken of the Holy Spirit as the Wisdom of God ; since that Title had become appropriated to the Son. The meaning and intention of Theophilus are plain. He spoke of Father, Son and Holy Spirit under the Title of Trias, or Trinity—the Threefold Godhead.

CHAPTER V.

THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY AS CONTAINED BY IMPLICATION IN THE EARLIEST PREACH- ING OF THE APOSTLES.

AND now the way is clear for systematic treatment of our subject. The reader has got before his mind what is claimed, and what is disclaimed, for the Doctrine of which we are treating. Mysterious it is, no doubt—as how should aught not be mysterious which bears on the Nature of God? But, first, it is not, as has been shown, a sheer contradiction in terms, a setting forth of Three Gods, an assertion that there is, or that there could be more than One Eternal Being, to Whom can belong the Attributes connoted when we name the Name of God.

Nor yet is it a meaningless proposition, set forth for the sake of effect: it does not affirm of God that He is Triune in His Nature, as a mere impressive assertion of the fact that His dealings with man must present Him to ourselves in three characters.

Nor, again, is it an arid speculation about which theologians define. It is simply a statement of fact about a subject beyond our understanding, yet having a practical bearing on ourselves in relation with God. It secures that relation being based on an adequate, if

imperfect, understanding of what He is in Himself—of His being essentially, and from Eternity, in His innermost spiritual Being, the highest that man can conceive when he pictures Perfection to himself. It represents Him as essentially Perfect, with the three great elements of Perfection, inseparable, for reverent minds, from the thought of Eternal Existence ; with Power and Wisdom and Love as His essential, eternal characteristics. It maintains that Oneness of the Godhead, apart from belief in which we could not think of Him as God ; while yet it preserves our ideals from the horrible deistic conception which presents Eternal Power as divorced from Eternal Love.

But all this might be satisfying and helpful as a glorious, subjective picture, an effort of the religious imagination, and yet might be found on examination to have no objective grounds for an appeal to man's understanding. And so we must go on to inquire what reason we actually have for believing it true in fact, not merely delightful in thought.

The first step in this direction is to be found in a historical inquiry—how came it to be believed in the first instance?

And here be it premised once for all that in such an inquiry as this we must start with one large assumption. Historical criticism of books has a place, and a legitimate place, in the studies of a Christian man. Let him satisfy himself—he has a right to be satisfied—that the books which make up the New Testament were written by the very Authors whose names they have borne in the Church. But such an inquiry as

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this, legitimate and needful though it be, has no place in our present treatise. It has to be taken for granted as already made and done with. The Canonical Books of the New Testament, and specially the Gospel according to St. John, are to be treated as the work of the very writers to whom they have always been ascribed in the Church's historical beliefs.

The assumption is doubtless a large one. But a theological treatise such as this must make, whatever be its subject, a good many large assumptions. It must leave whole departments of belief entirely out of its scope if it is to attain its own objects. Our object is doctrinal, not critical ; and criticism, even defensive criticism, were wholly out of place in a book which has this as its scope.

From what point, then, must we start for surveying the history of the Doctrine? About this there can be no doubt—from the point where the Church set out when her Master withdrew from earth. His parting command to proclaim Him to the world, laid the earliest necessity upon her of formulating before her own consciousness Who and What her Master was. In other words, our point of departure must be found in the earliest preaching addressed by the Apostles to the world, beginning from Pentecost itself.

As long as the Christ was here, He Himself, His Teaching, His Life, His Example, what He was doing for men, and what men were doing to Him, sufficed for the whole field of thought of those who attached themselves to Him. But when He withdrew from the world, and bade men be witnesses for Him,

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then at once, in some form or other, they had to put it to themselves, and to those to whom they were sent—what was it that they had to proclaim? They had to preach Christ to men, to proclaim, as they put it themselves, that “through the Name of Christ” there was something to be brought to man which he had not enjoyed up till now. What was this? and what was He, that through Him—not simply, be it observed, through that which He had taught and had exemplified, but, in some special sense, through His Person—salvation should be preached to the world?

The teachings addressed by the Apostles to the earliest inquirers among the Jews must furnish the answer to this question, and give us the starting-point that we seek. These give us with touching *naïveté* the attitude adopted by the Church, the idea with which she began in fulfilling her Master’s injunctions. There had been no time for reflection. The message with which they begin represents their intuitive conception of what had been left them by Christ, to which they were told to bear witness. While He is still fresh in their minds, gone from them just ten days ago, necessity is laid upon them to bring Him before people’s minds, as embodying in His Own proper Person God’s purposes of blessing to the world.

This is all that they have at their command—the Christ of their experience, behind them; the world for which He died, before them; the very men who were listening, found guilty of invoking on themselves the Blood of their innocent Victim. How then did they actually set out to bring Christ and His murderers

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together, that He might "see of the travail of His Soul and be satisfied"? (Isaiah LIII. 11); that He might reap, through them as His witnesses, the fruits of His dying prayer for those who had brought Him to the Cross?

This being the actual situation, there was but a single method possible. They must start with the needs of man, and proffer for their satisfaction the facts about Him Who could supply them. And this was what they actually did.

Their theology begins with the heart; as all theology must do which is to make a persuasive appeal to the best understanding of men. Its appeal presupposes two things—the first, the need of man for some one to bring him to God; the second, the belief of the Jews that God had told them beforehand that One was to come Who would so bring him. That Jesus was a Saviour for man, and that this His saving character was not a new idea, that to proclaim Him as saving mankind was to say that He focussed in Himself every ray of illuminating light which had ever shone on the world; in a word, that He was the Messiah—such was the sum and substance of the preaching with which they set out.

But what a world of doctrinal belief is presupposed in these simple ideas! One Who just eight weeks before had been living the life of this world, had been eating and drinking and sleeping, and going about among men, is proclaimed as not only a teacher, as not only a human example, but as altering all the relations between mankind and their God. His Person

and not His teaching, Himself and not His example (His Death and His Rising again, far more than His life in the world), what He was, far more than what He did, form the subject of all that was said of Him. And this, to put it again, not two months after His death. What a tragic irony of fate must we hold to have fallen upon Jesus, if those who had known Him best, had had the fullest opportunity of observing Him, who had learnt, if anybody had, to apprehend at least something of His teaching, gave up in that short time the leading ideas of His life, that simple preaching of righteousness which some would have us believe was all that He brought to the world, and went off, on their own responsibility, into mystical ravings about His Person which He would have been shocked to hear. But this is what actually happened, unless we are prepared to believe that when Peter and the earliest preachers proclaimed Him as Saviour of the world, they were merely repeating, at His bidding, a message bequeathed by Himself. They often had failed, as we know, to take in the full depth of His teaching. They tell us with touching simplicity of all the misunderstandings with which they had vexed His soul. But are we to take it as fact that the three years spent by His side had all been consumed on one thing—on learning to give to the world a wholly mistaken conception of what He had come to bestow on it? Had the delusions of hysterical women so far prevailed over men that a totally false persuasion about visions of Jesus risen had closed their eyes once for all to the genuine objects of His mission? Was it the fact that

growth in goodness, through the following of higher ideals, was all that He ever had taught them as what He was offering to the world? and that they, eight weeks after His Death, had lost all sense of proportion between their own beliefs about His Person, and what He had actually taught them?

If this be an impossible supposition, as it surely seems to be, then plainly their actual preaching about what He had done for the world will furnish us with adequate materials for gaining at least some idea of what He had taught them Himself as His message bequeathed to the world through them, His chosen disciples.

Now that message, as actually delivered, contained by necessary implication a world of theological belief about Him Who formed its subject.

This, at least, it contained to begin with—that the Man Who had been crucified and had risen, was shown by this, His Resurrection, to occupy a unique position in relation to God and man; that He stood, in some sense at least, in the attitude of Mediator between God and man; that through Him, on account of Him, approaches to God could be made which had never been possible before.

The reason and the manner of it all we must admit that they did not then formulate as clearly as they afterwards expressed it in writing. Yet they did assume from the first that there obtained in His case alone a unique relation to God, which differed in kind, and not only in degree from anything enjoyed by other good men. All this is contained by implication

in the phrases employed about Him in St. Peter's address to the crowd, delivered on the Day of Pentecost, and preserved, in substance at least, by St. Luke, in the Acts of the Apostles (Acts II. 14-36).

We can have no right to assume that those phrases were only unmeaning rhetoric, conveying no accurate sense to himself or to any one who heard him. And unless we are prepared to reduce them to this, they did contain by implication, nay, they actually expressed with a good deal of directness, the belief that the Crucified Jesus could bring mankind to God as none other had brought or could bring them. For in those words of St. Peter's, He is One Whom death could not possibly hold (Acts II. 24); in Whose Name we can be baptized for the remission of sins (Acts II. 38); Who has received from the Father the Gift of the Spirit, to pour upon the world (Acts II. 33).

On another occasion soon after, the healing of the impotent man, He is proclaimed as the Prince and Author of life (Acts III. 15, 16), as One through faith in Whose Name the healing of infirmity had been wrought. And when the Apostles are challenged by the rulers for preaching Christ to the people, they reply that preach Him they must, because "there is none other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts IV. 12).

These sayings contain, as has been said, a whole system of theological belief about the Person of Him Whose work they proclaim: no man could gravely have pronounced them unless he had been prepared to go farther in formulating his faith on these points.

They are indeed the fruitful germ containing the entire belief which the Church now holds about Christ:

But this unique relation obtaining between Christ and the world, in which He, withdrawn from sight, was still to be present as Saviour, carried with it, in the mouth of the speaker, and under the circumstances of His speech, the germ of another belief, as yet not formulated exactly. For the utterance depended, by a necessary connexion, on the event which called it forth. The Pentecostal effusion of the Spirit was what had revealed to St. Peter this dependence of men here and now on One Who was no longer among them as He had been shortly before. It would not be true, we must fully admit, to affirm that the truth about the Spirit of God as a Person, not a mere effluence of Power, was revealed in its entirety at Pentecost. But we shall not go beyond the mark if we say that from that day forth it was certain that such a belief must permeate the mind of the Church with an ever-increasing intensity. This belief about the gifts and the Presence of the Spirit would need to be adjusted in some way with the earlier Creed about the Unity of God. If belief in Christ as Saviour, in the sense of St. Peter's first sermon, implied some belief about His Person as contained by necessary implication in the new apprehension of His work, it seems to be equally certain that belief in the descent of the Spirit, as something poured forth by Him, carried with it some doctrine of the Spirit which could not stop short, in the end, of all that we affirm of Him now in the Creeds of the Catholic Church.

For the actual relation to Jesus Christ held forth for the acceptance of the world, on this first occasion of its preaching, depended at every turn on a link between Him, out of sight, and those who were called to accept Him. That link, as afterwards explained, was implied quite necessarily from the first. And it came to nothing less than this—that He had sent to the world, for all who would believe and accept Him, a Person Whose Presence and Whose working should bring Christ nearer to men as a Saviour out of sight, than He had been to His immediate followers in the days of His sojourn on earth.

It is important that this should be insisted on here, because the tendency of current thought is to treat our beliefs about the Person of Christ, still more the truth about God the Holy Ghost, as mere unauthorized accretions, first foisted by St. Paul and St. John—or by the writer who is said by this school of thought to have forged the Gospel which we call by that name—on the simple moral teaching which was all that Jesus impressed on His disciples. Whereas, unless the narrative of the Acts is altogether fictitious, we find that within two months of His Death, the men who had conversed with Him and known Him as a Friend, who had seen Him work and sleep, who had eaten and drunk with Him habitually, were proclaiming Him as Saviour of the world. And we find the same men, upon the same occasion, setting forth an experience of their own, gone through on that very morning, as meaning that Jesus, now out of sight, had sent them a Gift which was more than a Gift. This Gift we know from the preceding

chapter to have been a personal visitation of One Whom Jesus had spoken of beforehand as ready to supply the blank of His departure, to make those whom He was leaving behind, no longer orphans deprived of their Loved One (Acts i. 4 compared with St. John xiv.-xvi.).

Once more, these truths are not fully developed in the earliest preaching of St. Peter. They are rather implied than stated in full. But still, as implications, they are present. And, indeed, this lack of complete development, this tentative adumbration, to be completed later on, is just what gives to St. Luke's report its character of transparent truthfulness.

But this must be left for fuller treatment in the chapter immediately to follow. We have to pass at this point from the first setting forth of Christ crucified, in St. Peter's Pentecostal Address, to the portrait of the Saviour in the first three Gospels, which accounts for all that St. Peter said, and for the form in which he said it.

CHAPTER VI.

THE PORTRAIT OF JESUS CHRIST IN THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS, AS ACCOUNTING FOR THE TEACHING ABOUT HIS PERSON AND WORK CONTAINED IN THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.

THE subject of the following chapter is the Portrait of Jesus Christ as set forth in the first three Gospels, and its bearing on the teaching about His Person and Work contained in the Acts of the Apostles.

The Memoir given by St. John is reserved for subsequent treatment. It is not to be thought of as at all less authentic than that of the Synoptic Evangelists, but it is obvious to any one comparing the two that it is pitched in a different key. It has less in common with the earlier Gospels than with the treatment of His Work, and the teaching about His Person, to be found in the Apostolic Epistles. St. Matthew, St. Mark, and St. Luke, except in one or two passages, find a closer counterpart in St. Peter's first sermon than in the general tone of St. John, or, say, of the Epistle to the Hebrews.

When we wish, then, to understand the earliest teaching imparted to the wondering crowd just after the Descent of the Spirit, we turn for its full explanation to St. Matthew, St. Mark, and St. Luke, with their early, simple recollections. It is when we desire

to understand the Epistles that we consult the beloved Disciple, with his outpourings of all that his heart had learnt after life-long pondering on the Master and His teaching.

These Gospels, doubtless, were committed to writing after some of the Epistles were written. But they embody an earlier stage in the Christian apprehension of the Person of Christ, a stage when the writers could not have said, "though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet henceforth we know Him so no more" (2 Cor. v. 16). For they body Him forth to us for the most part as Friend, as Teacher, as "Jesus the Prophet from Nazareth of Galilee" (St. Matt. xxi. 11). And though they recognize Him as Messiah, and on some occasions actually as Son of God, they have not as yet that full apprehension which we find in St. Paul or St. John, or in the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews. Their Portrait has just that elementary character, that touch, half wondering, half realizing, which gives to St. Peter's address its intimate feel of reality, and which convinces us that St. Luke must have reported it faithfully. The sermon embodies a particular moment in a period of progress and transition. The thought of the Lord's disciples was still at a comparatively early stage on its way from Messianic expectation, with a sense of actual fulfilment, to that of developed Christian apprehension of all that Christ Jesus is, and has effected. It is a later stage, of course, than that represented in the Synoptic narratives. But the marvellous passage from dawn to day, from shadow to substance, from longing

to fruition, is not completed as yet. They have got past the point embodied in St. John, when he tells us how Philip assured Nathanael, "we have found Him of Whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of Joseph" (St. Jn. i. 45). But they could hardly as yet have expressed their beliefs in words about "the effulgence of the glory of God, and the very image of His Substance" (Heb. i. 3).¹

But, allowing for this limitation, for this earlier phase of reflection, what is it that we actually find in the Three Synoptic accounts of our Lord to account for St. Peter announcing Him at Pentecost as the Saviour sent by God?

We find that the life which He lived and the teaching which He gave to His followers had left on them one great leading impression—that beyond what He did and what He taught, as He lived among men in Galilee, there was something in that which He WAS, which not only accounted for His teaching, for the attitude of authority which He assumed, but which made Himself, His own Person, the one grand fact of facts in the eyes of those who knew Him. It is true that the im-

¹ Even careful study of the three in the light of the now accepted belief that the Gospel according to St. Mark was in the hands of the other two writers, brings out an unmistakable advance in spiritual apprehension and appreciation, as the one incomparable Life was studied and inwardly digested in the memory of those who had known it. But, for the purposes of the present book, it will suffice, if I am not mistaken, to recognize but two levels in the different planes of appreciativeness displayed by the compilers of these Memoirs—the Synoptic and the Johannine.

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pression is seldom put forward as something thought out by themselves, and appreciated while He was with them. On the contrary, there is nothing more touching, as a proof of their humble simplicity, of their earnest desire to be truthful, than the way they continually bring out how their own sad lack of comprehension was always vexing His Heart. They keep constantly making it plain to us that all which they appreciated afterwards was ever displaying itself before them in the words and acts of their Master, while they had their eyes quite holden, and their ears unaccountably dull, to take in what His Words implied, and what His Life was continually showing forth. Was there ever a touch more pathetic in its admission of culpable dulness than the fact brought out by St. Luke in those opening verses of the Acts which supplement his earlier narrative—that they asked Him about an earthly kingdom even after the great forty days, a few minutes before He ascended (Acts i. 6, 7)? Or were ever men more frank in acknowledging their own mistakes than we find them to have been, when they tell us how the great confession which acknowledged our Lord as the Messiah was followed by carnal presumption, as St. Peter took Him to task for saying that crucifixion awaited Him (St. Matt. xvi. 21-23)?

Side-by-side with, interpolated amongst, these instances of human stupidity in apprehending the things of the Kingdom, we find all through the Synoptists the Lord presenting Himself—His Person, as distinguished from His message—as that which the

world required for bringing it nearer to God. At one time He puts Himself forward as One Whose yoke must be taken up by those who are weary and heavy-laden, because it is He alone Who, with a Son's unique apprehension, understands Who the Father is (St. Matt. xi. 25-30). At another, He asserts this Sonship, attested by a special miracle, as a ground for His claiming exemption from the tribute exacted of strangers for the maintenance of His Father's Temple (St. Matt. xvii. 24-27). He institutes a sacramental meal in which He enjoins His followers to commemorate Him to all time, and says that the Bread is His Body, Which is being given for them, and that the Wine of the Sacramental Cup is His Blood (St. Mark xiv. 24), or, the new Covenant in His Blood, Which is being shed for the remission of sins (St. Luke xxii. 20). He foretells His Own Crucifixion, not only as a pattern of submission, but as showing that the object of His being, as manifested then upon earth, was to be something more than a pattern—a Life given up as a ransom for many (St. Mark x. 45). A lavish expenditure on His Person of that which it was perfectly true might have been sold for much and given to the poor, is justified, and more than justified, as constituting a freewill offering which should bring a lasting name to her who was censured for making it (St. Matt. xxvi. 13). And, again, in a similar case, the tears which were shed on His feet, as He sat at the Pharisee's table, are taken as an offering of love whose result was forgiveness to the penitent : while His host's neglect of His comfort, and of the courtesy which might have

been paid Him, is rebuked, in contrast with this, in a way which we should find quite inexplicable in any one else but Himself (St. Luke vii. 38-45). A prophet, whose message from God was the single thing to be thought of, would be guilty of flagrant presumption, of quite unworthy self-seeking, did he treat appreciation of himself in any such manner as this. Again, He arrogates to Himself the power of forgiving sins, which, His enemies rightly argued, belongs to God alone. And in His eyes the bodily healing which followed on this absolution, derives its principal value from the proof which it gives of His right to absolve (St. Mark ii. 10). In the closing moment of His so-called trial, with His malevolent enemy presiding, instead of disclaiming Divinity for Himself, He courts the doom of a blasphemer ; letting words be put into His Mouth which asserted His Sonship to God ; nay, He adds to the claim which was attributed to Him, the prediction that He will be seen hereafter "sitting at the Right Hand of Power, and coming in the clouds of Heaven" (St. Mark xiv. 62).

Now these acts and these claims of Jesus Christ are as far as they could possibly be from gratuitous additions to a simpler story. On the contrary, we find them embedded in the only extant narratives admitted by certain critics as giving us any information about His life, His words, and His ministry. Drag them out of it, and what remains to authorize our pronouncing at all as to what He encouraged His disciples to believe about Himself? The narratives in which they are contained fall to pieces as mutilated

things with no claim on our credence at all. But, if they represent in fact the impression made by His Person on those who had witnessed His Life, then they account in the fullest way for all that was attributed to Him in the earliest teaching of St. Peter, a few days after He left them. That they were only half understood at the time when the words were spoken, or at the time when the occurrences took place, is allowed, as has been just pointed out, by the authors of the Gospels themselves. That new meanings were found in them afterwards, when they were grouped with subsequent events, must appear a most natural thing to all who believe in those events. While perhaps it is equally natural that to those who do not so believe it should seem to be perfectly easy to suppose them interpolated afterwards, to treat them as piously invented, or perhaps unconsciously evolved, to justify later beliefs which had no foundation in fact, and which He had never inculcated.

But it lies beyond our scope to discuss devices such as this for accounting in some forced way for what seems to a reverent Christian to need no accounting for at all. Suffice it for our present purpose to point out that the passages are there, embedded in the structure of the Gospels, and that, granted the subsequent events—that the Resurrection and the Ascension took place, and that the Coming of the Spirit at Pentecost was not a mere hallucination—then it is totally needless and wanton to doubt that they form a real part of the actual impressions and recollections out of which the Gospels were formed.

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Now, granted these suppositions—that our Lord did speak and act as the Evangelists tell us that He did, that after so speaking and acting He rose from the dead on the third day, that after ascending into Heaven He sent to His disciples at Pentecost a new illumination by the Spirit—then what could be more natural than that men who had followed His Life, and had conversed with Him after He rose, should, on the strength of all these events, begin to proclaim Him at once as a Saviour to themselves and to the world?

They are not represented in the Acts as setting forth at the beginning of their ministry the full belief in His Person, and in His relations to the Father, which we find in the Apostolic Epistles, and in the Gospel according to St. John. And, had they been so represented, the narrative would have missed that atmosphere of truthfulness which pervades it just as it stands.

Indeed, the earliest addresses in the Acts have many of the same characteristics as the Canticles preserved by St. Luke in his Gospel. Had any one invented them later, when doctrine had become more defined, when belief in the Person of Christ and in all that He did for the world had assumed more articulate forms, he must have read into their simple diction something far more elaborately dogmatic. As they stand, they have the perfect *naïveté* of utterances spontaneously called forth by an unprecedented experience. Another common feature is that both have the Old Testament character, which is absolutely

natural to the occasion. The discourses give us, with touching simplicity, the earliest half-formed consciousness of all that, with time and reflection, grew out into the doctrine of Christ to be found in later books. A more highly developed Christology would show them to be later inventions. On the other hand, the fervid conviction that Jesus is the Saviour of the world, brings them into exact agreement with the Portrait in the first three Gospels; and this accounts for them just as they stand.

It is strictly germane to our purpose to have dwelt on this at some length; for in developing the scriptural proof of the Doctrine with which we are dealing, it means much that we should find a transitional stage between that which the Apostles understood while Jesus was with them on earth, and that which was taught to the Church in the Apostolic Epistles and in the Gospel according to St. John. It is continually thrown in our teeth by the depreciators of definite belief, that the doctrine of the Person of Christ, and of the Office and work of the Holy Ghost, as taught by St. Paul and St. John, were accretions, and mischievous accretions, to the teaching of Jesus Himself—that He simply taught religion, while they invented dogma. It is therefore essential to our purpose to show how the earliest preaching imparted to the world by His followers falls in with utterances of His Own, as related in the earliest Memoirs portraying His Life and teaching.

And, again, it is essential to our purpose to show that the later teaching, in which He is treated as

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Divine, is fully contained, in the germ, in the claims which He made for Himself, as these early Memoirs present Him. Nor could this be fully brought out did we not understand in full how the teaching imparted in His Name forms a perfectly natural link between the story of the first three Evangelists, narrating their primary impressions, and the deeper, more reflective presentation contained in the later Gospel.

CHAPTER VII.

FULL NEW TESTAMENT DOCTRINE OF CHRIST'S PERSON—CONSIDERATIONS INTRODUCTORY TO THE TREATMENT OF THE EPISTLES.

WE have seen that the first preaching of Christ immediately on His sending the Holy Spirit, contained, and inevitably contained, but a *minimum* of explicit dogmatic teaching. It started with the needs of man and with His Person as somehow supplying them. But it appealed to heart and conscience, and not to doctrinal apprehension, except as regards His Messiahship. His work much more than His Nature, what He did, rather than what He was, what mankind may look for in Him, not directly what He is to God, formed the subject of St. Peter's first sermon.

And so with the doctrine of the Spirit. His Gifts, what He was actually effecting in illuminating the conscience of the Church, are mentioned there indirectly. It could hardly be learnt from this sermon that the Spirit would come to be worshipped as coequal with the Father and the Son.

From this elementary teaching—implying much doctrine, as we have seen, but directly stating very little—it seems best to pass on at a bound to the fullest, most developed statements to be found in the writings of the Apostles, as to what Christ is in Him-

self, and in His relations to the Father : as to what the Holy Spirit is as a Person of the Godhead Itself.

The intermediate steps in the development can then be separately examined, by way of bringing out to the reader the way in which the mind of the Church became gradually illuminated on the subject.

This fully developed belief will be treated exclusively, to begin with, in the words which were used about Christ by others, not by Himself—by St. John as he writes in his own character, and not as directly recording the sayings of Jesus about Himself, and by the writers of the Apostolic Epistles. What we have to contend with to-day is a tendency to attribute to the Apostles, to treat as accretions to the teaching of Christ, all doctrinal beliefs about His Person, and to confine His Own proper teaching to a “simple Gospel” of morality, or, at the most, of personal religion.

And clearness will accrue to our treatment, if we first examine the product in the fullest teaching of the Apostles, and then look back for the matrix, still extant in Christ’s own sayings as recorded for us by St. John ; treating these as displaying the materials out of which the Epistles grew up. This will show how all that is taught us in, say, the Epistle to the Ephesians, is the pure and inevitable outcome of what Christ said about Himself—how St. Paul must have written his Epistles to Churches which already possessed, in a more or less realized form, the very beliefs about their Master which St. John records as taught by Himself.

By the time the New Testament closed, the Church had been permanently enlightened as to what her

Founder was, and how He was related to God ; as to what the Holy Spirit was, and how He was given to mankind by the Father, through the Son. And we find that this illumination had led to her adoption in practice of several Names for Christ which convey in different forms some two or three different aspects of that which no human expression can fully or adequately convey ; that these various aspects of truth are strictly complementary to each other ; and that each safeguards our thought against pressing to undue conclusions the idea which the others convey when not thus tempered and corrected. Each guards us, in fact, against treating the truth as though the vessels of human speech could contain its infinite volume.

These terms—to anticipate for a moment what must be reserved for fuller statement—are “The Son of God,” “The Word” or “Reason” (for both these ideas are contained in the Greek *Logos*), “The brightness of the Father’s glory, and the express image of His Person”.

Each of them will be found, on examination, to set before us the Person of Christ in terms which convey to us primarily some relation which He holds to Another—to Him Whom, during His Ministry, He habitually called His Father in some special sense of the word.

But as preparatory to dealing systematically with the doctrinal utterances of the Apostles, it is necessary to touch in advance on two more general points. First, as to the way they present themselves throughout the books which contain them, embedded among other sub-

jects which form the bulk of the contents : second, as to how it came about that doctrine, simply as doctrine, should present itself in the books of the New Testament to even the extent that it does.

First, then, of the comparative length of the passages which contain pure dogma, as compared with other subjects. It is a commonplace of New Testament Commentaries, how small is the doctrinal element, as compared with the devotional and practical, and how many of the strongest statements come in as *obiter dicta*. This, of course, is perfectly true, and it is exactly this characteristic which makes them so wonderfully convincing. On both the moral and the intellectual sides, a man's least premeditated utterances are what tell us most of his mind. They are the outcome of his habitual thought. They represent more than anything else the characteristic abundance of his heart, out of which his mouth speaketh : they smack of the impalpable atmosphere in which he lives and breathes : he brings them out as being matter of course to him. He finds that your thoughts and feelings are moving in a different plane from that where his own are at home, and so the things which he takes for granted, and never requires to express, are brought out to make plain to you the meaning habitually embodied in his ordinary, everyday utterances. To employ a modern distinction, they represent his "unconscious self," which is nearer him than his conscious life. They express the categories of his thought, which condition his articulate utterances ; half-realized, it may be by himself, till the need of enforcing them on others makes him do what,

perhaps, for himself, seemed neither needful nor worth while—to draw them to the surface of his mind, and to put them at last into words.

What Christ can be to man, and what man ought to do for Christ, are the constantly recurring themes which pervade the Epistles of St. Paul. And it is for enforcing these that he brings out to the light sometimes what he habitually assumes as being true—that, without which these ordinary topics could never have presented themselves to him in the way which we find that they did.

“How have I seen in Araby Orion,
Seen without seeing, till he set again,
Known the night-noise and thunder of the lion,
Silence and sounds of the prodigious plain.”¹

It is experiences and meditations like these, worked into the fibre of his character, more familiar to his inward eye than the daily surroundings of his life, which come out in the occasional passages where he passes from hortatory or devotional utterance to enunciate in doctrinal language his beliefs about the Person of Christ. But those beliefs are the hidden foundation of all that he knows Christ to be to the souls that abandon themselves to Him : they underlie every word that he writes about man's relations to Him.

Second, if such be the attitude of the writers towards questions of doctrine in the abstract, how comes it that the statements which we find have come to be present in their works? Why were not the

¹ Myers, St. Paul, original edition.

minds of their readers just left in their natural attitude—in spontaneous devotion to our Lord, and instinctive submission to His Spirit? If the attitude of dependence and devotion, of looking for everything to Him, and of rendering Him oneself in response, was the really important thing in the eyes of both writers and readers, then why was it complicated at all by any enunciations of doctrine, such as those which we find as prologues at the head of the Gospel of St. John, and the Epistles to the Romans and the Hebrews?

The answer is not wholly simple. It can only be furnished satisfactorily along several converging lines. There are various currents of feeling to be remembered and taken account of, and there are different classes of passages to be weighed in their different contexts.

To begin with the most general consideration, the New Testament from first to last is the setting forth of a unique Personality as a Power to transform the world, to bring all who will submit themselves to Him into new relations with God, and therefore with themselves and with their neighbours. And how, we may boldly ask, was it conceivable that such should be the case without some question being raised, and that from the very beginning, as to how all this could be? Given the fact of a Personality such as this, bringing about an effect such as this, and it was absolutely inevitable from the first that those who were invited to accept it, and to put themselves in living relations with it, should ask for some satisfaction as to *how* it re-

sponded to their needs—what it was essentially and in itself, that it should become all this to other men. The most imperative needs of the heart must make some claim on the understanding, if Religion is not to degenerate into mere hysterical feeling. That which claims the allegiance of men, their entire surrender of themselves, must in some way justify its demand, and that at an early stage. Some account of the Person of Christ was rendered inevitably necessary by all that was told about His work. It would, and it did remain subordinate to the Religion and the life which demanded it. The doctrine, as Bishop Lightfoot put it, must ever be the scaffolding for the life. What Christ is eternally, and in Himself, need only be known by us to enable us to avail ourselves intelligently of that which, in time, He is to us. But up to the point so required, and in such form as conduces to this, we must know something about it.

And this, which is true of ourselves, as we saw in our earliest chapters, was just as true and as inevitable in the very first days of the Church, while the Canonical Books were being written.

And again, the whole atmosphere of the New Testament is pervaded with the sense of Christ as accounting for its own moral standard. It must refer everything to Him. Nor is this reference of all things to Him a mere tribute to the greatness of a character, the acceptance of a standard of conduct resulting from the personal atmosphere in which He moved and taught, a response to a spiritual stimulus applied to mankind from without. It assumes a power within us estab-

lished by contact from without. It is based on a commanding force, originating, it is true, in Another, but assimilated by man as his own. It assumes, and it relies on, a transformation effected in the heart of individuals as members of an organization; or of a communion more intimate than this, not so much an organization as an organism. A new self, a new Creation, is postulated in man and among men, and to this the appeal is addressed. Now this, as a factor in life, introduced by One among men, but differing, it was felt, in kind, from the influence and work of all others, suggested, and could not but suggest, a something not of this world in Him by Whom it was effected. And so when the task of a writer is to exhibit the exacting perfection which forms the Christian's standard, he falls, by an inevitable process, into appealing to something in the Pattern which belongs to other realms; which comes forth into human life as a new revelation in time of things whose home is in eternity. How else should he account, we may ask, for Christ having made Himself to men what they found in their experience that He was? His work, His present, living work, as saving them from their own lower selves, was what constituted Him in the minds of believers a Being of a different order from all that human experience had known, or had dreamt of, in the past. And this we find in the New Testament, not so much as an occasional statement, inserted by arbitrary hazard, or introduced by deliberate intention, but more as an underlying assumption, occasionally asserting itself on the surface in direct and explicit

enunciation. The Epistles are written by their authors as men to whom these assumptions have become the fact of all facts. They address themselves spontaneously and intuitively to communities, of whom the writer takes for granted that they have absorbed these grand conceptions, are living out these lofty ideals. The doctrines, the facts of the other world, upon which the ideals are based, lie latent as presuppositions under every line of the writings in which they are occasionally articulated. And when they crop out on the surface they present themselves with easy spontaneity : they take themselves for granted, so to speak, as part of the corporate consciousness of Humanity regenerate in Christ.

But underlying convictions like these must come out on the surface sometimes. A man's mind cannot always be full of them without their occasionally being uttered. And the proportion which they actually bear to devotional and practical matters is much what might be expected if the above be an accurate description of the place which they had in people's thoughts. A point to be established here, an illustration to be given there, a mistake to be corrected in a third place, account for the occasional expression of what is always taken for granted.

But again there is another consideration which has to be taken account of if all the facts are to be faced. The devotional element has been spoken of as figuring largely in the Epistles. Now a Saviour, if such be believed in, Whose presence and practical working unite in closest communion the seen and the unseen worlds,

must Himself have a prominent place in the devotional feelings and acts of those who accept His salvation. And such we find that He had from the moment recorded by St. Luke (St. Luke xxiv. 52), when "they worshipped Him" after the Ascension, before they returned to the city to wait for the promise of the Father. Nor is it conceivable for a moment that the attitude of personal communion, of dependence, of actual worship, which we find adopted to Christ in all the Apostolic writings, could maintain itself year by year without being called upon somehow to justify itself to people's minds. It originated, no doubt, in the heart : it was more an intuitive conviction than a reasoned-out matter of thought. Yet how could it maintain itself, or be justified, especially to Jewish believers, without reconciling itself somehow with their older, traditional Monotheism? The belief in the Unity of God was enforced, had it needed enforcement, by the utterances of Jesus Himself. His earliest followers of all were nothing if not devout Jews. They addicted themselves to the worship of the Temple with no less devotional fervour for knowing that its typical worship had found its antitype in Christ. How then could they offer to Jesus any honours of personal *cultus*, and not go on to inquire what it was that justified their doing so? and how could it ever be reconciled with the ancient, unchangeable belief that "The Lord thy God is ONE LORD"? This single consideration by itself would account for the Prologue of St. John; for St. Paul's adducing the Resurrection as declaring Jesus Christ the Son of God; or for the

stately enunciation to believers of the eternal relations of Christ to Him, Who, after speaking through prophets at sundry times and in divers manners, had now in the last of the times spoken to us through a Son.

In view of these converging lines of thought, we may pass on to the Doctrine of Christ's Person as finally drawn out by St. John, by St. Paul, and by the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE GODHEAD OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST AS FULLY DEVELOPED AND EXPRESSED IN THE EPISTLES—DIVINE TITLES ACCORDED TO HIM IN ST. PAUL, ST. JOHN, AND THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS.

1. Summary statement and comparison of those Titles.
2. The Group of Titles which express His Divinity rather in terms of Function than of Personality, THE LOGOS, THE EFFULGENCE OF THE FATHER'S GLORY, THE EXPRESS IMAGE OF THE FATHER'S PERSON.
3. The Title which expresses His Divinity rather in terms of Personality than of Function, THE SON OF GOD.
4. The two conceptions set forth in these Titles combined into the full Idea of Divinity.

I.—SUMMARY STATEMENT AND COMPARISON OF THE TITLES.

THE Doctrine of the Godhead of Christ, as contained in the Canonical Scriptures, takes its ultimate, fullest expression from the titles used to denote Him by St. Paul, St. John, and the anonymous writer who gave us the Epistle to the Hebrews.

These Titles are four in number—The Son, The Word, The Effulgence of the Father's Glory, The Express Image of the Father's Person. But they fall into two divisions. On one side stands that of The Son, which sets out with the thought of distinct Per-

sonalities, and thence carries on the mind to the thought of Relations subsisting between Them. On the other side there stand in a group three Titles which take their point of departure from the thought of Relations—we might even say, of Functions—internal to the Being of God, and then lead on our thoughts to the truth that Divine Relations imply that there are Persons to be related, and that from all Eternity.

The difference between these points of view is not small or unimportant.

All Titles used by men to set forth Facts about God are necessarily but figures or shadows. No one of them attempts, or pretends, to convey the whole of the truth. No one of them is free from peril ; since each comes short of the whole : while to come short in things Divine, is of itself to be so far misleading. Each figure, then, thus falling short, thus suggesting falsehood and error through the force of the very expression by which it conveys a half-truth, it follows that every Title calls aloud for other Names at once to supplement and to correct it ; to supplement, since it necessarily falls short ; to correct, since it inevitably misleads if left to stand alone.

The impression conveyed by the Titles as a whole includes, and must include, two thoughts, that of Function and that of Personality. But it makes an important difference to the helpfulness of using the figures, whether the mind dwell first and dwell chiefly on the single Title or on the group ; that is to say, whether it start and continue on the lines which are indicated for it by the thought of Personality or of Function. The first is the more material conception,

and, just for that reason perhaps, at once the more vivid and the less safe, if used exclusively or over-much. The second, if the less clear, is the more spiritual, and therefore the less dangerous.

To put this in a different form, the whole of the Titles together, when focussed into a single view, accord to our Lord Jesus Christ Identity of Nature with the Father ; they set before us a single, indivisible Being, in which Two have mysterious and conjoint subsistence without being separate either from Other ; and they indicate Activities which are not identical, within a Being Which is not divided.

But that which comes specially out under the Title, Son of God, is the truth of the duality of the Partakers within the Identity of the Nature ; because the first and most obvious suggestion, when we hear of Father and Son, is that of an Originated Being, deriving all that He is from Another Who is called His Father. It follows of course from this thought (if we remember that the Nature is Divine) that being shared cannot mean being divided ; that Unity needs must follow where Divinity is assumed to begin with. But this is an after-thought, a correction, a needful reservation. Duality is the starting-point of the Titles ; Unity, their saving clause. For the conception of Fatherhood and Sonship sets out with the idea of two Personalities, of distinguishable Centres of conscious activity, set forth diversely from each other, and standing in mutual relations. The thought of Origination, Derivation, Generation may so far modify this as to save our conception of Unity from being altogether done away ; because community, nay, identity, of Nature is implied

by the fact of Derivation. This complete identity of Nature may make a saving clause to that of Duality of Persons. But still, the Duality comes first in this presentation of the facts, and the Identity must be held side by side with it.

Now this is an aspect, and a necessary aspect of the one great truth of Trinity in Unity, of diversity in identity; an aspect which secures our recognizing in our Lord a Being worthy to be adored as Personally partaking with the Father in the very Nature of God head; yet which saves us from merging Him in the Father as one and the same Being regarded in a different character. But, as resulting from this distinction, it necessarily entails the terrible danger that, always in popular thought, and in the less guarded moments of even educated believers, the Unity of God should be lost sight of—that we should tend towards belief in more than One God.

As the necessary corrective to this, the other group of Titles sets out from an opposite point of view. They suggest, to begin with, at any rate, a distinction of Functions rather than of Personalities. The whole first stress of their suggestions is laid on the substantial Unity, while the diversity is only suggested as a secondary and subsidiary thought; the Divine diversity of Functions implying Eternity of distinctions. They would, indeed, if they remained uncorrected, without the regulative complement which follows from Fatherhood and Sonship, come short, in their turn, of full truth; they would reduce the Trinity of Persons to differentiation of Functions. The loss to be sus-

tained on this side, would be, if the comparison be admissible, undoubtedly a smaller evil than the positive error introduced if Fatherhood and Sonship were pressed so as to violate the Unity of the Godhead, so as to make the Father and the Son Individuals partaking respectively in a Nature common to both. For the inviolable Unity of God is the primary truth of Religion; and falsehood which trenched upon this would lead to abysses of error more fatal to godliness itself than anything else that we could name.

To put all this in a different form (for it needs to be persistently pressed) the mysterious truth about God, that He is One, while yet He is Three, must be approached from different sides, that we may believe what we cannot comprehend, with the nearest approach to accuracy attainable by creatures such as we are. And in this twofold approach we may start with the conception of Persons in mutual Relations with each other, and think afterwards of the Relations of those Persons—Generation, as of son from father; Procession, as of spirit from one who breathes—taking Personal Distinctions first, and from these arriving at Relations. Or else we may start from the Relations themselves, and reflect that if there are Relations there must be Persons to be related—or distinctions which would be spoken of as personal in the case of finite beings: that since there are Relations, and these Relations are Eternal, we cannot conceive of their existing except there be Persons to be related, and that from all Eternity.

And it would seem that if we start at this end, by

saying that Eternal Relations presuppose Divine Personalities, we take up a safer position than if we set out with Personalities and so arrive at Relations. For if we run greater risk of obscuring the Glory of Each as subsisting in Very Divinity, we are more effectively preserved from trenching on the Unity of All.

All this must be handled more fully in treating of the different passages where the Titles are respectively employed. The reason for touching on it here is that the order adopted below is the opposite of that which is followed in most of the books on the subject. These commonly start with the Title, the Son, and then introduce the others as its necessary complements and correctives. Whereas, in all that is to follow, the opposite order is pursued: the thought of Relations has been taken as the basis, and that of Personalities as their complement. I am persuaded that many shrinkings from adequate belief in the Trinity result from a false persuasion, articulate or unexpressed, that, at the bottom, belief in three gods is what orthodox Christians hold; while, again, there are half-taught believers who afford some justification to such a libel on the Faith.

For the sake then alike of unbelievers, of seekers after orthodox belief and of uninstructed believers, it would seem that the preferable order for approaching the subject to-day is to start with the Titles which, taken by themselves, tell little articulately and positively of anything but functions and operations existing within the Godhead; and which leave the resultant distinctions to be inferred or otherwise supplied.

As against this, it might possibly be urged that the tendency of current thought is all in a unitarian direction; that people are everywhere found to be degrading their conceptions of Christ from that of the Son of God to that of a mere human teacher. And this is perfectly true. Yet the declension is exaggerated or promoted by the idea that a Divine Christ must imply a plurality of gods. Once get it firmly established that the Eternal Trinity of the Godhead is absolutely compatible with its Unity, and those who honour the Saviour as Perfect Man upon earth may possibly be found more open to adore Him as Lord from Heaven.

II.—THE TITLES WHICH SET OUT FROM THE CONCEPTION OF FUNCTION AND LEAD FROM THIS TO THE CONCEPTION OF PERSONALITY—THE LOGOS, THE EFFULGENCE OF THE FATHER'S GLORY, THE EXPRESS IMAGE OF THE FATHER'S PERSON.

Of the Titles, then, now to be examined, the first and much the most important is LOGOS, the Word of God, as found in the writings of St. John. It expresses, in its primary signification, the Thought or Reason of God, whether regarded as internal to Himself, or as issuing forth to express Him. Or rather, since these two meanings are intimately united in the term, it signifies the Thought of God as having an essential tendency to come forth in external expression. That the All-wise is the All-condescending, Who desires to be known of His creatures, is the thought which seems to

be suggested when the Personal Wisdom of God is revealed under the Title of Logos, or Word.

We shall find from the very first start that the Title as used by St. John, expresses or necessarily suggests that this Word, this Self-expression of God is not a mere function or operation, but a Being Whose essential Nature can only be described as Personal. But, once more, this is secondary, inferential, is suggested rather than expressed, is to be gathered—necessarily, indeed—from the context and surroundings of the Title. The Word, the Wisdom, the Reason, the inward and the outward Self-realization of God suggest first and foremost a Function, an Activity, albeit that function has Personal Subsistence, is more than a manifestation of energy.

“ In the beginning was the WORD, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him ; and without Him was not any thing made which hath been made. In Him was life ; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness ; and the darkness apprehended it not ” (St. John I. 1-5).

What, we must ask, is the root-idea which underlies these mysterious expressions ? As far as words can express it, it seems to amount to this—that contemplation and an object to be contemplated are essential to the Being of God : that to this Eternal Contemplation is due creation in time : that God’s revelation of Himself to His creatures is accounted for by the precedent fact that a tendency, a disposition to reveal

Himself, is essential to His innermost Being : that He is Eternally going forth to One Who is, in some sense, other than Himself : and that therefore it is that, now and in time, He flows out into intercourse with creatures.

To approach it in a different form—the Eternal Perfection of God, so far as man can conceive it, requires that our thoughts about Him should include Eternal Wisdom as part and parcel of His Being. But Wisdom presupposes, as its condition, an object on which it may be exercised. To call any Being wise if there were absolutely nothing to be known save Himself in solitary Majesty, were as nearly a contradiction in terms as anything could possibly be. And therefore when we think of God, it seems that we must do one of three things—either, first we must attribute to Him Wisdom, without any object for its exercise, which is actually, or at least very nearly, a contradiction in terms. Or, second, we must assume that from Eternity, He had something quite other than Himself, upon which His Wisdom could be exercised—which is to say that there was a second Eternal Being—an absurdity, or, indeed, a contradiction. Or, third, we must say that He had within Himself an Object of Eternal contemplation (that is to say, that some Distinction obtains essentially and Eternally within the Deity Itself), so that He can be equally and at once the Thinker and the Object of thought—which is the doctrine of the Logos, as taught by St. John. The Thought or Reason of God is treated in the words of St. John as something Co-eternal with Himself, a Function, yet no mere

Function ; as not merely an exercise of Thought but a Being Who Himself is that Thought ; as a Relation but more than a Relation ; as a Being related to Another, and yet not separate from Him ; as an objective Realization of One of the essential Perfections which belong to Conscious Being, namely Wisdom with an object for its exercise.

But we must see in fuller detail how these thoughts are conveyed by St. John (St. John I. 1, etc.). "In the beginning was the Word"—before aught existed but God, He had in Himself Thought or Reason, and that Thought uttered or expressed.

"And the Word was with God"—or rather, to be more perfectly literal, "the Word was *towards* God"—*πρὸς τὸν θεόν*. Which Dr. Liddon paraphrased as follows : "The Face of the Everlasting Word, if we may dare so to express ourselves, was ever directed towards the Face of the Everlasting Father". Eternal mutuality of converse is the idea conveyed by this sentence—a Life held in common between Two, Who are yet so entirely One that the Second is called the Thought of the First. Which idea of Unity of Being is clenched by the words that follow: *καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος*, "and the Word was God"—the Eternal Nature of Godhead belongs in fullest measure to the Second as well as to the First (St. Jn. I. 2).

Thus the idea of a Function, of a Relation, with which the term Logos sets out, leads on at once and directly to that of a Duality of Persons, between Whom converse obtains.

And yet in the very next words, the idea of a

Function reappears, although in a modified form. The Eternal Existence of the Word, in which He is regarded as primarily a Function, has led to the mention of a mutual contemplation, in which He is regarded as a Person. Next follow His Activities in the sphere of Creation ; where the thought of Personality would seem to come first. Yet here the writer avoids with care the thought of proper initiative, of independence of action. He says, "all things were made *through* Him" ; the preposition *διὰ*, *through*, being proper to One Who is made use of by Another ; Who is rather a Mediating Cause between Creator and creature than Himself a veritable Creator (St. Jn. i. 3).

The sequence of thought is completely consistent. The Title, Logos, Reason, Expression, indicates the going-forth of the One into Eternal Self-expression ; which Self-expression or Forthcoming of the One is what constitutes the Being of the Second. And this has its counterpart in time : here again it is through the Second that the One comes forth from Himself to give being to created things. And from this it follows in the very next words that this acting of the First through the Second is no non-essential, variable matter, but obtains all through Creation : for, "without Him," we are told, "did not one thing come into being which did so come" (St. Jn. i. 3). It is, in other words, of the essence of Creation that it takes place as a temporal counterpart or fulfilment of Relations themselves Eternal.

The idea, then, of a Function or Relation within

the Godhead Itself, as constituting the Eternal Being of Him Who in time was born of Mary, is the first or leading note of the special teaching of St. John. The Church's great debt to him is that he did thus set it forth. And yet from first to last he so makes use of this idea, so presents this side of truth, as that we read in his every phrase that the Eternal Thought of God, Eternally expressed and coming forth, is not, as our thought is, the exercise of a power which might have been dormant; is not something stirring within Him as He abides in solitary activity; but that within His own essential Being the Reason through Which He thinks is Itself an Object of His Thought, a Something distinguishable from Himself, though we dare not say distinct from Him; that because He is Perfect and Eternal, and therefore Eternally Wise, His Wisdom has a substantive Existence; that It is ever contemplated by Him, is not simply Himself described as in contemplation.

Thus Thought, or Reason, or Contemplation, or Utterance, the starting-point of St. John's Christology, does not rule out, but leads up to, the idea of Fatherhood and Sonship, of plurality of Persons within the Godhead. It assumes distinctions, essential and Eternal, within the One Divine Nature. Nor, indeed, if we only look deep enough, could this be otherwise than it is. The Function of Reason Eternally exercised presupposes an Eternal Object. An Eternal Object can only be Divine. And as there cannot be two Divine Beings, separate One from the Other, we can only conceive of the Object of Thought as in

some mysterious sense internal to the Being of Him Who thinks. That is to say, where the Unity is Eternal and Perfect, some Duality within the Unity is presupposed by the Unity Itself; unless, indeed, we are prepared to affirm that God can be Eternally Wise without an Eternal Object on Which to exercise His Wisdom.

But, again, from this point of view, the Duality presupposes the Unity, if the Dual Being be Perfect and Eternal. It is the going forth of the One in Thought which constitutes the Being of the Second: this, indeed, is why that Second is called the Word of the First, not merely the Thought, but the Word, not merely Reason inherent in God, but Reason expressed and uttered, the realization of Himself in Thought and in its Expression.

But now we must turn to the other two Names which we have grouped with the Title of *Logos*—"the Effulgence of the Glory of God," and "the very Image of His Substance" (Heb. i. 3). Being found in but a single passage, the Prologue of the Epistle to the Hebrews, and having no previous history such as that which we associate with *Logos*, they are, of course, of less importance. Yet each has importance and helpfulness in developing the one great idea of function, activity, force, as constituting an essential element in the mystery of the Triune Being.

The writer is exalting our Lord Jesus Christ as being the Prophet of prophets, the Inaugurator of a New Dispensation, as having raised the relations of man with God to a plane unapproachable before, into some-

thing almost differing in kind from aught that had been possible of old. And in the amplification of his subject he writes of Him as follows : " Who being the effulgence of His glory and the very image of His substance, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had made purification of sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high ".

Here, as in the Prologue of St. John's Gospel, the two ideas of Function and Personality are expressly associated together. It is a Person that is spoken of throughout the passage ; One Who has taken part in the work of Creation, Who is called the Son of God ; One Who actively takes away the pollution of sin, then reposes in the glory which He has earned. Yet this Person is designated the Effulgence of God's glory and the very Image of His Substance.

He is, then, in the writer's conception, no separate Being, distinct altogether from Him Whom He thus displays and reproduces. Nor yet is He only a splendid name for a mode of Divine manifestation, whereby God has relations with His creatures. He is at once a Person Who reveals, and, Himself, the very Revelation. Being Son and the Heir of all things, He cannot be regarded and spoken of as having merely a relative existence, as being nought but an energy of Another. Nor yet can He be another individual being, devoting Himself to setting forth the Prerogatives of a solitary Monad above Him. He Himself has substantive Relations with the One Unoriginate Being. Yet He receives His own Existence so entirely from that of Another that He is spoken of as Effulgence and as

Image—Titles which, taken by themselves and apart from other designations, would in no sense indicate Duality of Persons, but only activities, functionings, of Him Whose Light shines forth, Whose Image is expressed or reproduced. Apart from their immediate context, and from reflection on other typical passages, this sense would exhaust their significance.

What then is the inner meaning of the Functions and Activities suggested respectively by these Titles of Effulgence and of Image? They suggest two lines of thought, and this too clearly and intelligibly to allow of our taking the reduplication as a mere rhetorical amplification of a single indivisible conception.

Each indicates external manifestation, the communication of oneself to others, the reflection of One not wholly seen, through, or on, a medium, a secondary organ of communication, that others may thereby be illuminated. They each suggest existence which is real but not unoriginate; which is essentially a derived Existence, which takes its whole being and character from That from which it is derived.

For, whatever be the case in scientific exactitude, effulgence, light, is in ordinary parlance regarded as the outcome of fire, as manifesting the fact of combustion, and as being itself the effect of it. Fire, we say, burns, and throws out light: we do not naturally say that light shines and causes fire.

And the seal reproduces, in the impression, the stamp of the symbol, or of the letters, which it bears.

The thought which underlies both terms is then that of Self-expression; of the reproduction, in a

Second, of all that belongs to a First ; of a derived, though a real, Existence ; the First being Unoriginate, the very Source and Fount of the Being of the Second.

But each of the Titles, apart from the other, would suggest something quite inadequate to express the whole Relations between 'This First and This Second : while the two Names taken together are mutually supplementary and corrective. It would seem that the two are simultaneously employed because the thought of Effulgence, of the manifestation of something in itself invisible, would fail, if used alone, to convey an adequate conception of Relations mutually exercised ; while the title, Image, used alone, would suggest no real Identity of Nature, but a merely external resemblance with no underlying Unity. Fire and effulgence are inseparable, but the effulgence results from the fire, and has, at least in our ordinary conceptions, a being less substantive and real. The original and the image, the seal and the impression are equally real and substantial, but their existence is separable, indeed separate, and has no underlying identity as distinguished from mere resemblance.

Therefore either Effulgence or Image, if used of an Originated Person, would convey a false suggestion, unless corrected by the other. And the use of the two together is no mere amplification ; it serves an important purpose of mutual supplement and correction. Combined, they effect a purpose which either, used separately, might frustrate : they convey a sense of Derived Existence, of One reproducing Another, though Himself inseparable from Him ;

while that Other, Himself Unoriginate, finds expression for His inmost Self in the Act which constitutes the Second, nay, which is the Second, or Derived, Subsistence.

Both Titles derive much value and importance from the light, which, severally and combined, they cast on the Eternal Acts which constitute the Divine Triunity. They convey, or they adumbrate at least, the idea of unfolding, of expansion, of a tendency to Self-expression on the part of the Eternal Father. For fire goes forth, makes itself known, finds outward expression, in effulgence; a seal reproduces itself, makes known what it is meant to express, in the stamp which it imprints upon the wax. And in virtue of these suggestions, essentially conveyed by the terms, this passage sets forth under other figures the ideas contained in *Logos*. For *Logos* includes, as we have seen, both the outward expression of Reason, and the underlying, presupposed Reason Itself. Now the inner working of Reason falls in with the exact suggestion conveyed by effulgence as the working of flame; while the thought of the seal reproduced by the stamp corresponds to the going forth of the utterance to give substantive expression to the thought.

Both terms then have much in common with *Logos*—much more than they have with *SON*—and have therefore been grouped with it here. The place which the three Names hold in developing a true Christology might be further dwelt on now. But on the whole it seems to be best to take up the other

Title, with which these three contrast. After it has been dealt with in detail, alike in the greatness of the truth which we specially learn from its use, and in some of the obvious dangers to which that use is exposed, it will be possible to grasp more fully how the group which has already been treated is essential to the full conveyance of the Truth.

III.—THE TITLE WHICH STARTS FROM THE CONCEPTION OF PERSONALITY, AND HAS TO BE CORRECTED BY THAT OF FUNCTION—THE SON OF GOD.

In the opening words of the Epistle to the Romans, St. Paul writes thus of Jesus Christ : " His Son, Who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, Who was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of Holiness, by the Resurrection of the dead, even Jesus Christ, our Lord " (Rom. i. 3, 4).

The words carry back our thoughts to the earliest preaching at Pentecost, and indicate how that led the way to the loftiest after-Revelations of what Christ is in Himself. For they treat the Resurrection from the dead as that which declares or designates the Human Christ of the Gospels as the Son of God in power. It was in virtue of His Rising from the dead that St. Peter proclaimed Him as Saviour. St. Paul goes one step farther in using the same great fact : he declares that it constitutes Him for Christians not only Saviour from sin but " Son of God in power ".

Not that the title, Son of God, was new to Christian ears. It was used by our Lord Himself in a

saying so plain and direct that it established a place for itself in the Character portrayed for the Church in the Synoptic Gospels themselves; which means that it took hold of His followers at a time when the truth of His Nature was little, if at all, understood by them.

In that tender, pleading utterance in which He invites to Himself the weary and heavy-laden, that He may give them rest, He founds His right so to call them, His ability so to refresh them, by claiming for Himself that Sonship to God upon which succeeding generations of sinners have reposed from that day to this, as substantiating His power to give them rest:—
“All things are delivered unto Me of My Father: and no one knoweth the Son, save the Father; neither doth any know the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal Him” (St. Matt. xi. 25-30).

The aspect of His Person here given is that of identity of Nature between Himself and Him Who sent Him. It implies that He made God known, not as other prophets had done, by declaring the truth about Him, but in a manner final and unique; by displaying before the eyes of men the Character of God Himself embodied in Human Form. And therefore it accounted at once for what we have observed above, that His Person, not His message, was the key-note of all His Ministry; that He called men to come to Himself, did not merely invite them to God, as other messengers did; and that He looked upon service to Himself as directly rendered to God. For Sonship as claimed by Him, and as predicated of

Him by others, implied nothing less than this—that He subsists in the same plane of Being with God, the Eternal, the Unoriginate; that the only Eternal difference between Jesus Christ and the Father is that the One Divine Nature which is shared by both alike is derived by the Father from none, while in the Son it is derived from the Father.

This side of the Nature of Christ, His equality, though a derived equality, with the One Supreme Being, in all that He essentially is, comes out in two striking passages in the Epistles of St. Paul's first captivity, where he does not use the term, Son. In enjoining unselfishness and humility on his beloved Philippian converts, St. Paul adduces as their pattern the condescension of Christ's Incarnation. And in doing so he uses expressions which not only assume, but draw out, belief in His absolute equality with the Father Who sent Him hither: "Who, being in the form of God, counted it not a prize to be on an equality with God, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men" (Philippians II. 6, 7).

The words "being in the form of God" denote an equality of Nature, which admits of no distinction as regards Eternal Existence, in each of the Persons named. For "Being" (*ὑπάρχων*) signifies, in the Greek, having one's very essential existence. And "in form" (*μορφῇ*) does not mean in outward semblance, but in His very inmost Being. No words could possibly go farther: they lay down that what constituted His Birth as Man, the consummate pattern

of humility, was the fact that He ever subsists in a sphere of Personal Existence equal to that of the Father. That equality, we are expressly told, He did not regard as "a prize," as a thing to be grasped at for Himself, but "emptied Himself"—laid somehow aside what is necessarily and essentially His own—by "taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men".

The other is the place in the Epistle to the Colossians, where it is said that "in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead in bodily fashion" (Col. II. 9, 10). The lesson imparted is that He is the only Mediator by Whom we men are filled full (*πεπληρώμενοι*) with all that God has to bestow; so that we need no other agencies, how exalted or how spiritual soever, to place us in relation with the Father. And the expression which assures us of this is that in the very Godhead Itself there is nothing of complete Divine Nature which is not inherent in the Mediator, revealed in Bodily Form. The idea is so far the same as that conveyed by "Son of God," that it indicates One Whose augustness of Nature is equal to that of the Father; though it does not lay stress, as does the other, on His deriving this Nature from the Father.

Contenting ourselves with these few passages for giving us the mind of St. Paul, we may pass to the writings of St. John.

It has been pointed out above that in a treatise like this no questions of Biblical Criticism can be discussed or entertained; that it must be taken for granted that the Books of the New Testament Canon

are the work of the Authors whose names they bear. This rule is observed in the text. But the reader is asked at this point to refer to the detached note on St. Paul and St. John at the end of chapter nine. It seems that the writings of St. Paul can only be really accounted for by assuming that he, at his conversion, found ready to hand in the Church beliefs about the Person of Christ corresponding to all that we find in the books ascribed to St. John. And this seems to throw great light on the much-disputed question of the Authorship of the Fourth Gospel. Why doubt that the beliefs were set down as we find them drawn out there, by the beloved Disciple himself, if the Church can be seen to have held them many years before his death?

We are not, indeed, concerned at this stage with the whole of the Fourth Gospel. The words of our Lord reported by St. John demand a chapter to themselves. The passages to be dealt with at this point are statements made by the writer himself, not words attributed by him to his Master. These last serve two great purposes in regulating the Church's belief about her Lord. They are the source of a great part of our beliefs about what that Lord eternally is. But they are also essential to our rightly understanding how the writers of all the Epistles arrived at the beliefs which they express, how they found, as is plain, no difficulty at all in reconciling the Divinity of Christ with that which was the primary article of their own pre-Christian Creed: "The Lord our God is one Lord" (Deut. vi. 4). Under that particular aspect they are treated

below in chapter IX. and are therefore not to be introduced at this point.

We may begin the discussion of St. John with his First Epistle—ever believed in the Church to have been written before his Gospel, and perhaps with a view to introducing it to the faithful.

In that Epistle he writes of our Lord in words which both directly and indirectly attribute Sonship to Him; which describe His Relation to the Father as one of identity of Nature, with only this distinction, that He derives that Nature from the Father.

The teaching of this Epistle, believed to have prepared the Church for all that his Gospel contains, is given in a concentrated form in two most pregnant passages: "The witness is this, that God gave unto us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath the life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not the life" (1 John v. 11). "And, we are in Him that is true, even in His Son, Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life" (1 John v. 20).¹

If we take the two passages together they seem to attribute to Christ a Oneness with God the Father which can only be fully described as amounting to identity of Nature. For if we are "in God the Father, the True," in virtue of union with His Son, of mystical

¹ It seems safer, in this last-quoted passage, to resist the temptation to construe THIS as designating our Lord Jesus Christ, and so giving Him the Title of God; and to read the words as applying to the Father; though the other interpretation is admissible grammatically.

incorporation into Christ the Human Saviour, then Christ must be One with God as none could possibly be Who was not Himself Divine. If the words do not bear this sense, they are either misleading or unmeaning.

And this we might well maintain though we took them apart from their context. But then they belong to an Epistle whose atmosphere from first to last is pervaded with the thought of Christ as subsisting side by side with the Very Eternal God, and subsisting in such a Relation that the only difference between Them is that One is spoken of as Father, the Other as His Son; which is to say that the actual Relation is that of identity of Nature, but a Nature Unoriginate in the First, and derived from Him by the Second. Again, the object with which it is written is, "that ye also may have fellowship with us, and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ" (1 John i. 3); a co-ordination, we surely must say, which were nothing less than profane if used of any creature: for it conjoins Jesus Christ with God as the supremest object of desire to man, the creature of God. And, again, Jesus Christ is "Life" and "Light" in the estimation of the writer, as no mere creature could be to a serious believer in God addressing his fellow-servants about what they owe to their Maker.

For here be it clearly laid down that to a truly Christian thinker, especially to one bred a Jew, it were not only abhorrent, it were nonsense, to think that there could be a nature half creaturely and half Divine. Let it once be realized in the least what a Christian

means by God, and it is plain that to be less than Divine, in the fullest sense of the term, is not to be Divine at all. In the scale of creaturely existence there is a vast, scarcely measurable, interval between intelligence and non-intelligence, or between the intelligence of an angel and the instincts of a worm beneath our feet. There is no appreciable difference—one might say no difference at all—in the gulf which separates each from the Being Who created both. Each was called by Him out of nothing. He could cast back either at will into the nothingness from which it came forth. And this infinite, unspannable interval between Him and all other existence must teach us the impossibility of even conceiving of a nature which should not be creaturely alone and should yet not be wholly Divine. But even apart from this special thought, the spiritual air which we breathe, as pervading the Epistle before us, is permeated beyond contradiction with the thought that the Human Master Whom the writer had known and loved is, in the deepest Essence of His Being, identical with God the Father.

Thus far of a few leading passages among those where the term, Son of God, is expressly applied to Jesus Christ by His followers writing about Him in their own independent sense, and not (except in St. Matt. xv. 25-31) as reporting His words. The sense, to put it briefly once more, which the term is meant to convey, is that of a derived identity of Nature ; of a Being originated from Another, and yet Himself Divine.

But if the Title expresses thus fully identity of

Nature with God, it fails with equal completeness to express another truth of equally paramount importance, the Co-eternity of the Son with the Father. For all the associations of the word imply succession in time. A son shares the nature of his father, and shares it by personal derivation ; but he shares it by receiving it from his father, handed on by succession in time, and by free transmission from the father. In human thought and expression, derivation or origination is essentially and inseparably mixed up with the thought of succession in time.

In idea, then, the Name, Son of God, required to be modified and corrected to obviate misunderstanding. And in history, neglect of the correction gave rise to the most celebrated of heresies. It was by pressing the idea of Sonship to its obvious logical conclusions that Arius became a heretic, and denied that the Son of God subsists co-eternally with the Father. "There was a time when He did not exist," was the war-cry of the Arian faction as regards the Being of the Son. Hence it was that from the earliest days the term, Son, indispensable though it is, was felt to need limitation, did actually receive limitation, by the use of the other Titles examined in detail above.

And yet the Title, the Son, expresses, at whatever cost, at the risk of the gravest perversions, one necessary aspect of the truth, the fact that our Lord Jesus Christ subsisted before the worlds in a Nature derived from the Father, identical with Him in all things, save in this single respect, that that which is originated in Him subsists without origin in the Father. It con-

veys to the mind of the faithful the thought that He is One with the Father, as sharing, in veritable completeness, the essentials of His innermost Being.

Setting out with this as our starting-point, we are safe to honour the Son as we honour the Father Who sent Him, to accord to the Author of salvation the meed of adoring homage which is due to an Eternal Being subsisting in equality with the Father. But the peril implied in the Title and in the thoughts which the Title suggests, is that of trenching in thought on the Unity of the Godhead Itself. No doubt this very danger, in the days of Athanasius and Arius, as now in the twentieth century, was answerable for the minimizing tendency which leads unwary thinkers into doubts, and finally into heresies, about the Divinity of Christ.

IV.—THE TWO CONCEPTIONS SET FORTH IN THESE TITLES COMBINED INTO THE FULLEST STATEMENT OF DIVINITY.

Here it is that the doctrine of the Logos, of the Effulgence, and of the Image comes in to the succour of faith. St. John and the Author of the Hebrews can each of them write of our Lord, within the compass of a single sentence, under Titles which are principally Personal, and under others which in themselves are impersonal; they can treat of the Man Christ Jesus as Eternally communing with God and, therefore, as, in some sense at least, distinguishable from Him with Whom He communes, and yet as a Function, an Activity, within the One Divine Being.

In the Prologue to his First Epistle, when St. John

would summarize for his readers the message which he has to declare to them, he says that it consists of "That which was from the beginning, that which we have heard, that which we have seen with our eyes, that which we beheld, and our hands handled, concerning the Word of life, and the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare unto you the life, the eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us" (1 John i. 1, 2).

The Incarnate Lord and Master, Whose sojourning here on earth has reconstituted every relation in which man stands to God, is therefore designated by a Title which suggests in its primary meaning a Function rather than a Person; and this where stress is being laid on memories of sensible knowledge through eye and ear and touch: for the teaching about the Word of Life which he is communicating to his readers is concerned with "that which we have seen with our eyes, which we beheld and our hands handled".

And in the Prologue to the Gospel itself, the mysterious opening declarations about the Word and His Relations with God lead straight to the historical assertion that "John bare witness of Him, and cried saying, This was He of Whom I spake" (St. John i. 15). In a word, the Logos and the Man are here completely identified, and all that is asserted about the Word is brought into relation to the Man, nay, directly applied to the Man.

And in the opening sentences of the Epistle to the Hebrews, the Son, the Heir of all things, through Whom at last, as through the Prophets of old, Jehovah

had spoken to His people, is directly called the Effulgence of His Glory and the Very Image of His Substance.

It was this interchangeable, synonymous employment of terms in themselves so dissimilar, this power of passing in an instant from the thought of a Person to that of a Function, which enabled the Primitive Church to accept the Divinity of Christ as implied in His Office as Saviour. For it safeguarded faith in the Unity of God, as nothing else could have done, against the shock which it must otherwise have received from the doctrine of the Godhead of Christ.

The belief in Christ as equal with God introduced into Christian thought an element unknown, or dimly shadowed forth, in the Scriptures of the Older Dispensation. And any intelligent Jew to whom this belief was propounded would be forced at once to ask whether the words employed about Jesus, the Man, were compatible in any sense with the Unity, the Self-existence, ascribed to Jehovah by the Prophets. It was, indeed, for assuming equality with God that our Lord was attacked in the Temple and was afterwards condemned to death. And by Jews and Moslems to-day it is counted the rankest blasphemy that we attribute Divinity to Him.

But St. John and the Epistle to the Hebrews present the newly-found truth under exactly the form and shape in which it would be felt by their readers to strike a familiar chord.

For there are hints, adumbrations, glimmerings, of Wisdom as a Personal Being, to be found in certain

scriptured books both within and without the Canon ; while the Memra, or Word of God, had been treated in still more detail in the writings of Philo-Judaeus as in some sense subsisting with God.

These were but suggestions it is true, but they lay along the very lines which St. John was afterwards to develop. It would not be untrue to say that the Wisdom of the Book of Proverbs has enough of a personal character to mitigate the inevitable shock which a faithful Jew must have felt when he found that the Coming of Christ had modified, while it confirmed, the Belief about the Unity of God in which he had been trained from a child (Proverbs VIII., especially v. 22, etc.). We may believe that the Logos set forth by St. John, or the Effulgence, the Image of God, as treated by the unknown Author, must have struck on half-prepared ears ; that Jews had some dim perception that the Unity essential to God was not a solitary Unity ; that the I AM of Self-existence, as revealed to Moses at the Bush, was not read by the faithful in Israel as the ghastly Absolute, the colourless Blank, which some have imagined It to be ; that He Who inspired the Prophets was not that loveless Infinite after which Philosophy reaches forth, but which healthy Religion abhors.

This does not, of course, account for St. John, nor for his statements about the Logos : but it does explain a little how it was that his readers understood him : it accounts for the ease and facility with which he assumed that they would do so. The message itself which he brought remains not the less his own for the

fact that it had thus been led up to. But still it is important and helpful to find some explanation of the way it struck his readers and, perhaps we might even say, of the way in which he himself had been prepared, in the Providence of God, for receiving and transmitting his message. He himself and the Church which he addressed had to learn that Jesus was Divine. And the Doctrine of the Logos, his special message, was one of two great forms under which they were familiarized with the thought. The way had been prepared for this by the idea of Wisdom and its Utterance as something pre-eminently Divine, in all but a Personal sense. The idea of Personality then, as compatible with that of an Activity exercised, or that of a Function discharged, came in to bridge a great chasm. Jesus, they instinctively felt, must be worshipped by His Own redeemed. A Second God He could not be. One with the One God they learnt that He was. And that they were capable of learning it was due to just this fact—that it came as a familiar idea to think of Wisdom and its Utterance as sharing, in some sense at least, in the actual Personal Life of the One, Self-existent Jehovah.

To sum up this difficult chapter—the Doctrine of the Person of Christ, as finally developed by the Apostles, may be briefly summarized as follows. Setting out with the idea of a Saviour, acknowledged to be the Messiah to Whom the Old Testament bore witness, their instinctive reverence for Him and their sense of communion with Him, led them on to beliefs about His Person, intuitively felt to be conditions of

all that He was to themselves. Alike the needs of sinners and the aspirations of saints necessitated some explanation of all that Jesus was to them. It was found to be simply impossible to go on uniting oneself spiritually with One Whose claim to allegiance, Whose power to fulfil what He promised, was left altogether undefined. Quite true, it had been foreign to the spirit of the day for any to set himself down to work out systematically, *a priori*, a definition of the Person of the Saviour. But as practical needs required, as the instinct of imitation arose, as devotional aspirations reached upwards, as struggles to see within the veil asserted themselves with spontaneous insistency, there emerged in thought and diction certain titles, adumbrating at least what thinkers and writers discerned. They divined what Jesus must be in Himself, to account for what He is to His redeemed.

These intuitions, these instincts of adoration, could find in the words of the Master, as used by Himself upon earth, something more than mere suggestions—assertions, plain and unmistakable—to justify their attributing to Him characteristics absolutely Divine. Not an honour could be heaped on His Head which He had not anticipated for Himself in words which they had heard Him use as He discoursed to them of Heavenly Things, or as He interceded in their presence for all that the Father was to make them. Of these we are to treat in the next chapter, as accounting for all the expressions employed by His followers about Him. Consistently, then, with all this, the Titles given to Jesus Christ by three New Testament writers,

St. John, St. Paul, and the Writer to the Hebrews, bring out the Person of Christ as having relations with the Father which lead by a solid bridge from the thought of the Human Friend to that of the Incarnate God ; from the preaching of Jesus as Christ, which we find in the Acts of the Apostles, to belief in His Oneness with the Father, as defined in the Catholic Creeds.

Or, to take them in the opposite order from that observed above, these Titles are, first, the Son of God, the favourite expression of St. Paul—second, the Word of God, which is used by St. John alone—and, third, the twin terms, the Effulgence of the Glory of God, and the express Image of His Substance, found only in the Epistle to the Hebrews.

They all have much in common ; while each has a suggestiveness and a significance belonging to itself alone. They each have a substantive value, as embodying an aspect of truth conveyed by none of the others with equal directness and fulness. And each, as compared with the others, has a corrective and supplementary value. Since each is a human term, expressive originally of finite conceptions, they might each be pressed too far, till they took on a false suggestion : they each have a need for limitation which is met by some of the others.

The first point common to all is that each is at all events so used, so related to the whole of its context, as to leave it beyond dispute that it stands as denoting a Person, the Man Who was known among men as Jesus the Son of Mary. Nor is this any less plain because the first, the Son of God, is the only one of them

all which would, naturally, and apart from its context, be used as a Personal Name ; while each of the other three, though used unmistakably of Him, and of Him as a Personal Being, is primarily expressive of Divine Activity in one of several forms.

The next point in which they are alike, is that each is used of a Being Who is thought of as Co-existent and Co-equal with the God of the Older Scriptures, yet somehow distinguishable and distinguished from the One Unoriginate Being ; that each present Him as deriving His Existence from Another : which Existence, Originated though it be, He shares from Eternity with that Other.

The positive value of the Title, Son of God, is that it presents Him unmistakably to us as that which, for want of a more adequate expression, the Church defines as a Person. By which is meant, as I suppose, that it directly suggests and attributes an Existence with characteristics and activities which are proper to Itself alone. A being originated by another may possess, does often possess, self-centred, self-originated, activities which react on the original being. And all this is conveyed to our minds when our Lord is entitled Son of God.

The possible suggestion of falsehood which the Title, being human, conveys, is that of succession in time, and also of individual separation ; of His having been brought at some specified time, into a wholly separate Existence from the Father by Whom He is Originated.

To supplement the defective conceptions, and to

correct the possible falsehoods, conveyed or suggested by Son, we come next to the Title, the Word or Reason. The positive content and value of this is the idea of an Act, or Activity, Co-essential with, and expressive of, the Being of Him Who thinks and Who expresses Himself. As God could never be without Reason, and as One Who is Eternally Perfect must ever have exercised that Reason, the conception of Thought or of Utterance conveys no suggestion of succession; it leaves the Originated Nature to be thought of as existing Eternally with Him from Whom It originates. The Title is invaluable to us as starting our thought on right lines, for it leads us to think first of reciprocal Activity as that which discloses to us divers Personalities; and does not start from plurality of Being as that which makes reciprocal Activity possible.

And, lastly, we have two Titles, to be found in but a single passage, the Prologue of the Epistle to the Hebrews—the Effulgence of the Glory of God, and the very Image of His Substance—which convey in a form yet more direct, the thought that the Being of Christ as Eternally related to the Father, originates in, nay, *is* an Act, but an Act Co-eternal with the Being of the Father, and expressive of His innermost Essence, the outcome or reproduction of all that He is in Himself.

The net resultant of all these Titles is the conception of Eternal Activities within the Being of God, which constitute Him what He is, and which are absolutely essential to His Nature. These distinctions pre-

sent Him to our thought as exercising from all Eternity an intercourse or communion internal to His Own Divine Being. Such intercourse would in the realm of the finite, imply a plurality of beings existing independently of one another. As predicated of Him, the Infinite and Eternal, it leads us to think of distinctions subsisting within Essential Unity. It allows us to think of Him still as the One, Who knows no Second. But it does, as we shall see more fully, prevent our belief in His Unity from hardening into a monadic conception from which should be excluded the tender thought of Eternal Mutual Love.

CHAPTER IX.

THE UTTERANCES OF OUR LORD HIMSELF, RECORDED IN THE FOURTH GOSPEL, AS ALONE ACCOUNTING FOR THE CHRISTOLOGY OF THE EPISTLES.

IT was pointed out above that hints and adumbrations found in pre-Christian writers, would account for the ready reception accorded to the teaching of St. John ; while for that teaching itself they were insufficient to account. But the teaching of St. Paul and of the Epistle to the Hebrews have also to be accounted for somehow, most especially that form of doctrine which underlies the Title, Son of God. For here there is no mere question of a Function or Activity of the God-head, interpreted with a Personal meaning : the term not only implies, it directly states and enforces, that within the Being of God there are distinctions which we can only call Personal ; that Jesus is Eternal and Divine, albeit He proclaimed and adored as God Another Who sent Him hither.

How could any pious Jew either teach or believe such a doctrine ? How was it that any monotheist could regard it as credible or tolerable on the authority of any teacher ?

The answer must surely be that this had been

wholly impossible, had it not been vouched for and taught by One Whose credentials as a Teacher were higher than those of a John or a Paul. Apart from sayings of our Lord, recorded by St. John in his Gospel, we cannot account for the beliefs set forth throughout the Epistles: they are left to be explained by a process of evolution in the minds of the writers themselves—a hypothesis absurd on the face of it, if only we remember that they were Jews, devout and ardent monotheists in the sense of the Old Testament Scriptures. Had Christ not taught them Himself to regard Him as more than Man, nay to think of Him as equal with God, they would have thought it a betrayal of the Faith to look on mortal Man as sharing in Divine Prerogatives, to invoke Him as we find that they did, to speak of Him as the Son of God, as the Effulgence of the Father's Glory, and the very Image of His Substance, to couple His earthly Name with that of God Most High in salutations addressed to one another, to treat His sojourn on earth as constituting an emptying of Himself, a refusal to grasp, as He might, at acknowledged equality with God. If we find that they did all this within a few years of His Death, we are driven by sheer necessity to ask, had they sanction from Him for according Him Titles like these?

In a note at the end of this chapter these things are separately treated, as they bear on the critical question, who wrote the Church's Fourth Gospel? But for the general purpose before us such questions do not exist. We start by taking for granted the

Church's traditional position about the Books of the New Testament Scriptures. And in pursuance of this assumption, we have now to turn to St. John, and to ask what we learn from his Gospel that our Lord had said about Himself, directly and indirectly, to account for the words of His Disciples, and the beliefs expressed by those words.

They are partially accounted for, it is true, by words, and by asserted claims, to be found in the first three Gospels. But if we would fully understand them we have to resort to St. John, to Discourses and to isolated Sayings to be found in his Gospel alone.

To begin with the boldest of all, which made the most tremendous claim, and which was met with indignant defiance on the part of His Jewish hearers, He took more than once into His Lips, and unmistakably claimed for Himself, that Title of God Almighty which occurs in "the passage called the Bush," the mystical I AM of the Old Covenant, the palladium of Jewish monotheism. This assertion of Divine Self-Existence, for all who understood its significance, distinguished the God of Israel from the local, national divinities of the tribes among whom they dwelt: it proclaimed Him the One Supreme Being, compared with Whose unique Prerogative contingent and created existence shrinks abashed into its own mere nothingness.

That our Lord claimed this for Himself, and was well understood so to claim it, we find from the results which ensued when He used the expression I AM, upon two supreme occasions.

When objection was taken by His enemies to His saying that the Patriarch Abraham had seen His Day and rejoiced, He unhesitatingly replied to their challenge—"Before Abraham came into being, I AM" (St. John VIII. 58). And even apart from what followed, the meaning of the claim is unmistakable. Of Abraham He uses an expression which signifies contingent existence, commencing at a given time, and dependent on a Higher Will.¹ Of Himself He uses a word which expresses Eternal Being, and (so far² as the term is permissible) Absolute, Unconditioned Being : He applies to Himself, the Son of Man, the Unbeginning, Unending NOW, which admits of neither past nor future, which stands above time and space, and belongs to One Being alone.³

And if the expression itself could leave any doubt upon the point, the effect on His hearers would remove it : "they took up stones to cast at Him," as blasphemously asserting of Himself what belonged to Jehovah alone. Nor did He disclaim their inference, or regard Himself as wronged or misunderstood. He merely, by avoiding them for the moment, put off the doom of a blasphemer, denounced then and there against Him, to be met when His hour should come.

And again, when that hour had come, and when He had accepted from the Father the shame and the pain of going through it, He used the words once more. When the soldiers were seizing Him in the garden, He actually created an opportunity for showing that He still made the claim, and He made it with

¹ γενέσθαι.

² v. Supplementary Chapter, p. 221.

³ ἐγὼ εἰμὶ.

the crushing Majesty which belongs to Divinity, even veiled. "Whom seek ye?" He asked of His captors. The question was asked in the first instance, to secure the safety of His followers, and eventually it was so made use of. But when the soldiers answered, "Jesus of Nazareth," He rejoined with the words, "I AM"; with the result that, overwhelmed by the assertion, "they went backward and fell to the ground" (St. John XVIII. 5, 6). What doubt can we possibly have as to what they understood it to mean?¹

At His repeated application to Himself of the Title, Son of God, we need not do more than glance, after all that has been said in the last chapter. But there is one occasion at any rate which requires some detailed treatment.

In the discussion held with the Pharisees, when He proclaimed Himself the Good Shepherd, He made the startling assertion, "I and the Father are One" (St. John x. 30). Now the word, ONE, being used in the neuter gender, conveys no lower sense than that of Absolute Identity. It constitutes the claim far stronger and more direct than if the masculine gender had been used. Entire Equality in the scale of Being is the only sense which it will bear. Again they brought stones to cast at Him for blasphemy. In remonstrating with them for this He

¹ It has to be admitted here that this sense is not read in the words by great writers who have commented upon them. It has always appeared to the writer that, the soldiers being Jewish, not Roman, officials, the effect which they produced is conclusive about their meaning.

applies to Himself the term, Son of God : " Say ye of Him Whom the Father hath sanctified and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest, because I said I am the Son of God ? " thus treating as entirely synonymous the expressions which claim for Himself Sonship to God and Oneness with God (St. John x. 35, 36). The terms of this last claim form the point which is spoken of above as calling for some elucidation. He quoted the eighty-third Psalm, in which the Judges of Israel are spoken of as Elohim, gods. And He argues that a title like this, conferred as an official distinction on men commissioned by God, threw light on the claim which He was making when He said that He was One with the Father : " If He called them gods to whom the word of God came, say ye of Him Whom the Father hath sanctified and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest, because I said I am the Son of God ? " (St. John x. 35, 36). Now this sentence, taken by itself, would seem to have a minimizing force, to be reducing the Name, Son of God, to a sense just a little more exalted than the delegated title of Elohim, conferred on the Judges of Israel. But read in connexion with the context, it loses this minimizing force ; for the term, Son of God, as here used, was treated as absolutely synonymous with the words which had roused their indignation, His assertion of Oneness with the Father in the Glory of the Godhead Itself.

With this, then, we may leave that Title, so fully dealt with already, and pass to other expressions which assert His Unity with the Father. Many words recorded by St. John, as used by our Lord of Himself,

and bearing on the doctrine of His Person, might well be treated of here, did the demands of brevity permit. "He that hath known Me hath known the Father" (St. John xiv. 8): these words, as the only answer vouchsafed to the request of Philip for a satisfying sight of the Father, would seem to imply a relation between Him Who actively reveals, and Him Whom they asked to see, which nothing short of Divinity could justify the Speaker in making. "My Father worketh up till now, and I work" (St. John v. 17): as an answer to a charge of breaking the Sabbath, the words, as Bishop Westcott says, "treat His work as co-ordinate with the Father's, and not as dependent on it". In the course of the same discussion, there occur those other words, "As the Father hath Life in Himself, so hath He given to the Son to have Life in Himself" (St. John v. 26); which claim directly for the Son not only a work, but an Eternal Subsistence, co-ordinate with that of the Father.

But these can only be touched on, and many more must be omitted. And so we may pass at once to the most important of all, those used in the Great Intercession offered up in the presence of the Apostles on the way to the Garden of Gethsemane. For here, if anywhere, it must be that we shall find the fullest expression of all that His Consciousness contained about His Own Relations with God. His Work in the world was accomplished, His Sacrifice was about to be consummated. After struggling throughout the Last Supper with the agonizing sense of treachery, and of the doom of the unhappy traitor, after meeting with

tenderest allowance the dullness of unappreciative friends, in the act of finally bracing Himself to face the approaching Agony, He pours Himself forth unrestrained on the Bosom of His Father in Heaven. He asks to be glorified now with the Glory which He had with His Father before the world was. And in His Prayer for unity among His Own, He takes as its archetype and pattern the Oneness between Himself and His Father. The unity of equals with equals is that for which He intercedes—that redeemed sinner with redeemed sinner may find a closeness of union which nothing could ever confer but their sharing in a higher Nature, conferred by union with Himself. As the archetype of this unity between equals, He takes that between His Father and Himself. Nor does He in this Petition confine Himself to speaking of Me and Thee: He prays that “they may be One IN US”¹ (St. John xvii. 21),

The significance of words like these it is wholly impossible to over-rate. There are crises in all great lives when every word that is spoken has a character of perfect “inevitableness”. The situation and the re-

¹ In His words to Mary Magdalene beside the open tomb, Our Lord distinguishes sharply, by the use of different pronouns, between His Own Relation to His Father and that of His closest followers: “I ascend to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God” (St. John xx. 17). But when He speaks of Himself and His Father, in the act of praying as Man, He uses the plural, *us*. And this striking difference of expression marks the interval between Him, *THE MAN*, and all other children of men, as different in kind from that between Himself, and the Father Who had sent Him into the world.

sponse to it are such that the whole of the speaker's personality is to be found in his every utterance—that it would not be himself, but some one else, if he used one other word than those which he actually spoke ; because everything that he is in his deepest self is going forth spontaneously, unpremeditatedly, and is therefore entirely expressive of all that in essentials he is.

And never in the history of the world has such a crisis as this been encountered by such a Character. What He was, what He knew Himself to be, what had breathed in His every breath and throbbed in His every pulse since first He realized Himself, this was what found ultimate expression in the one last Intercession before He entered the garden. The cloud had not yet descended, to elicit the stupendous effort which braced Him to face, clear-eyed, the doom of impending Sacrifice. The triumph, the joy set before Him, for which He endured the Cross, were supreme up to entering the garden, and this was what found its expression in the words of which we are treating. The Life of Communion with the Father which had always been His from the first, broke out into ultimate expression when He coupled Himself with That Father : “ that they may be One IN US ”. We should hardly overstate the truth did we say that this single sentence were enough to account in full for all that is said about our Lord in His Personal Relations with God, throughout the Apostolic Epistles. For it embodies in the *minimum* of words the Consciousness of Christ Himself as to all that He was to God, and all that God was to Him.

To a Master Who spoke of Himself in these terms of Equality with God, there were but two possible relations for Jewish followers to adopt—they must part from Him then and there, as madly arrogating to Himself what to mortal man on earth were a blasphemously impossible position; or else they must accord to Him in full exactly what He had claimed. No attitude between these two was even remotely to be thought of, when once the claim was taken in, and thought had been exercised upon it. Which alternative was actually adopted we have found by examining their Letters. What ultimately conduced to its adoption was shown in the chapter before; it was necessitated for every Christian by the relations of dependence and communion maintained between Master and disciple, when that Master was out of sight. And for the relation itself, and for all that it seemed to imply as to what the Master was, the justification was found in these utterances recorded by St. John. Demanded by faith, and justified by reminiscence, they were embodied, expressed, handed on in the current traditions of the Church. And they found occasional expression—not systematized, dogmatic utterance, but a wording as exact as was needed—when instruction or edification suggested their being set down.

In which last sentence, as I think, is epitomized the Apostolic Christology, as found in St. John, in St. Paul, and in the unknown writer to the Hebrews.

NOTE.

THE COMPARATIVE CHRISTOLOGY OF ST. PAUL AND ST. JOHN AS BEARING ON THE CRITICAL QUESTION OF THE AUTHORSHIP OF THE FOURTH GOSPEL.

For the purposes of a book like the present the assumption has to be made that the Canonical Books of the New Testament were the actual work of the authors whose names they traditionally bear. For its scope is theological, not critical, and the total space which it occupies is little enough for our subject without any others being treated. In the text this assumption has been made. But in passing from St. Paul to St. John, as we draw out the Christology of the New Testament, a single point may be dealt with in a note, which is, in its ultimate bearing, purely critical, not theological. We assume that the Fourth Gospel is the work of John, the son of Zebedee; a fact which is strenuously denied by an important school of critics. Its atmosphere, they say, is such that it cannot be ascribed to the first century: it contrasts with the other Gospels in the view which it takes of Jesus Christ. Its motive, again, is different: it is not written, as they are, to give us a memoir of the Man and the Teacher: it has a theological object, to justify beliefs about His Person current among Christian people a century after His Death, but not to be found in the memoirs which give the recollections of His friends. These beliefs about His Person, they tell us, were really evolved by St. Paul, whose masterful teaching and personality impressed them on the Church as a whole. And then, a century later, it began to be felt in the Church that the beliefs which were now universal must have surely had their foundation in utterances of Jesus Himself. The feeling that there must have been utterances corresponding to current beliefs at last took form and expression in a work of

the second century, composed by some unknown genius, who secured for it acceptance and currency by writing in a character assumed for the purpose; by giving as the record of one of the Twelve what were really his own surmises about what Jesus must have said to account for the Church's beliefs. And so we got the Fourth Gospel, and were taught that it was written by St. John.

The point to be enunciated here is that the whole assumption thus made ignores one very large question which naturally comes into view as we study side by side the Christology of St. Paul and St. John.

It has already been shown in detail how the difference between the two writers does not lie in the actual position assigned by each to Jesus Christ in the scale of Essential Existence. They each of them write of Him frequently as a Person essentially Divine. Each calls Him the Son of God. Each constantly associates Him with God, as it were nothing but blasphemous folly to associate any being who was not himself Divine.

Now if we regard the Fourth Gospel as the work of an unknown genius who lived in the second century; if we treat its theological teaching as foreign to the original Gospel; if we assign as the motive of its composition a desire to ascribe to Jesus Christ, as reported by one of the Twelve, expressions felt to be needed in support of current beliefs; then one great question must be faced as regards the teaching of St. Paul—whence did he get the beliefs which he held about the Nature of Jesus Christ? Was he first brought into a Church which regarded its Founder and Head as simply the greatest of Prophets? And did he afterwards evolve for himself the entire beliefs about Christ which he subsequently forced on the Church? Was it due to the initiative of the Pharisee-Convert, the Apostle “born out of due time,” that beliefs about

the Godhead of Christ, never held by the original Disciples, became the leading tenets of the Church of the second century—took, indeed, such hold of her mind that a Gospel had to be invented, and attributed to John, the Apostle, in order to provide them with a basis in words ascribed to Jesus Christ?

Before this position is accepted the following difficulty must be met—how was it that so late a convert, a man “suspect” as a persecutor, an object of profound distrust as a supposed subverter of the Law, was allowed to foist upon the Church beliefs about her Human Founder which at any rate seem at first sight to trench with startling boldness on the old Monotheism of the Jews?

We find undoubted traces in the extant Apostolic books, of distrust of St. Paul as a man, and of bitter opposition to his teaching on legal and ceremonial points. The very School which assigns the Fourth Gospel to a writer of the second century has treated this divergence and opposition as forming a master-key to the interpretation of the whole New Testament. And then it would have us believe that this detested, distrusted man, opposed on all other points, revolutionized the Church's Christology with not a voice uplifted against him. For this and nothing less is what we are forced to believe if we admit that the doctrinal atmosphere pervading the Gospel of St. John is foreign to the Primitive Church, and can only be accounted for at all by assigning it to a later date. St. Paul either found the Godhead of Christ implicitly believed by the Church, when first he was converted into it, or else he evolved it for himself and forced it on the older believers—and this with success so triumphant that a Gospel had to be written, perhaps a century later, and ascribed to St. John the Apostle, to account for this development, and to bring the Life of Jesus Christ, so differently regarded at first, into harmony with current beliefs.

In the face of an absurdity like this, there is surely something to be said on the score of intrinsic probability, for the Church's traditional belief. Which is, to repeat it again, that her doctrine of the Person of Christ was implicitly held from the first, that it was clarified, articulated, expressed, with universal assent and acceptance, by the writers dealt with above; but that all this is entirely accounted for by the fact that St. Paul was converted into a Church which already held it implicitly; while St. John did but put into words, as he meditated, throughout his long life, what his heart had cherished from the first as the truth about His Master's Person.

CHAPTER X.

THE DIVINITY OF CHRIST IN THE CREEDS OF THE CHURCH.

IT seems best to pass at a step from the final utterances of Scripture to the Creeds of the later Church. The very contrast between the two will form the best preparation for displaying in a later chapter the process which came between, before the intuitions of Apostles were embodied in definitions by Councils.

The treatment of doctrinal truth in an age of inspired devotion is necessarily a different thing from the treatment of the very same truth in an age of abstract definition. Untrammelled intuition characterizes the first; a laboured accuracy, the second. The beliefs to be declared are the same: the difference of immediate motive makes their treatment wholly diverse. The age of the New Testament writers had Christ continually in view as the Saviour out of sight, with Whom they were ever in communion. His Mediatorial Work, His ruling of His Church on earth, His future Advent in Glory—this last, perhaps, close at hand—loomed large over all their horizon, leaving room for nothing else as an object of immediate interest. Dependence on Him for these things, and expectation of Him in this character, necessitated

beliefs about His Person, from whose statement in accurate terms the writers never shrink when occasion elicits their expression. But definition for the sake of definition, definition for accuracy's sake, is foreign to the spirit of the Epistles. Each writer discourses of His Lord in his own characteristic way ; St. Paul, with passionate earnestness, St. John, with contemplative intensity, the Writer of the Hebrews with splendid rhetoric ; but each in doctrinal language which shows that he thought of Him as God Incarnate, as Eternal along with the Father, as of the very same Nature with Him. But it is ever by way of enforcing duty, of intensifying adoring gratitude, of establishing faith in His Work on an unassailable basis ; it is never with the substantive object of simply declaring what He is.

But this is exactly the object with which each writer sets out in an age of doctrinal definition. Adoration may still be the ultimate end, but the immediate practical object is accuracy of doctrinal belief ; just because, in an age such as that, adoration is doomed to obsolescence unless it can justify itself by a process of accurate deduction from a well-defined body of doctrine. The conditions, no doubt, are less happy. But, being present, they are part of God's Providence, and as such they have to be complied with. No otherwise could adoring love be retained as the heritage of the Church. It had filled the minds of Apostolic men, and had been the privilege of all who succeeded them, but now it was in imminent danger of passing away altogether. The only way to pre-

serve it was to turn and interrogate the Scriptures as to what the Apostles believed, and to show that without that belief Christ Jesus could not be regarded as Saviour and as Mediator with God. Thus the grand necessity of the day was to save from total extinction the primitive doctrinal beliefs, to go back on the original testimony, to elicit from that, in systematized order, a body of dogmatic truth as an ultimate, unquestionable standard from which no appeal should lie.

Nor was the process free from complications. One such was inherent, indeed, in the character of the Scriptural testimony, in the fact that so much of its cogency was found in its undefined background, in its atmosphere of tacit assumptions, pervading the words of the writers, but seldom articulately expressed.

This artlessness of intuitive assumption, this reliance on a devotional atmosphere, this dependence for accurate understanding on the spiritual instincts of the reader, has a cogency all its own for those who are in sympathy with it : it is open to infinite cavil from those who draw near unconvinced. And as the few and scattered definitions to be found in Apostolic writings resulted from meditating on a Person, and not from aiming at a system, as they did but put into words, for incidental moral needs, what was felt to follow inevitably from gratitude for what He had done, the impressions gathered from their study must necessarily vary profoundly.

This brings us to the second element of complication—that the Being thus meditated on and spoken of is unique in human experience. He combined within

Himself two Natures essentially distinct, and never united save in Him. To think of Him in either light was, therefore, to some extent, to exclude consideration of the other. Being Man, and having lived among men, He must sometimes be spoken of by men as having everything in common with themselves, their sinfulness only excepted. Being God, from Eternity, with the Father, He must sometimes be spoken of, again, in words referring specially to His Godhead. Each expression, or set of expressions, is true of Him necessarily and completely, since He is both God and Man. But those which describe Him as God are inapplicable to the Humanity which He assumed; while those which apply to Him as Man do not hold of His original Godhead which He had before the worlds were.

And thus it came to pass—thus it could not but come to pass—that in the ages of uninspired writing which followed the days of the Apostles, expressions were used about His Person, and that by writers of credit, which dwelt, with exclusive and imprudent emphasis, sometimes on His very Godhead, at others on His humble Manhood; now on His Oneness with the Father, again on His Personal Distinctness; until the minds of simple believers were perplexed by these differences of statement, and of their more than seeming inconsistency. Human terms must stagger and give way under the burden of truth about God, still more about God becoming Man. And when every individual writer was free to express himself as he would about every aspect of the Mystery, without any recognized standard by which his words could be assayed, it was

nothing less than inevitable that "cross and circulatory" statements should be in vogue with even reverent writers, who meant to be accurate and cautious.

With these we must deal hereafter, so far as our purpose requires. But detailed accounts of theological speculations, arranged in chronological order, are apt to be dry and unattractive. And, so far as they must be set forth, they will gain both point and perspective if the reader first have before him the struggle for life and death between the Catholic Creed of Christendom and the heretical teaching of Arius, which we associate with the great Athanasius and the Fathers of the Nicene Council. With the material thus brought to a focus, it will be possible to indicate briefly a few of the intermediate stages which led to that celebrated controversy.

Reverent and cautious writers in the ages after the Apostles, had used, as was said above, some strange and contradictory expressions about the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ, about the Divine and the Human Natures which the instincts of Apostolic writers recognized as meeting in Him. But early in the fourth century the portent dawned on the Church of a teacher who bore her commission deserting the paths of decency, and assailing the truth of His Divinity in irreverent, nay in ribald terms. A presbyter of Alexandria, Arius by name, was brought to book by his Bishop for denying in so many words the Eternal Existence of the Son and His equality of Nature with the Father.

"There was a time when He did not exist" was the key-note of the teaching of Arius. Taking one of

the names by which He is known in the teaching of Scripture itself, and pressing the inferences from that to their ultimate logical conclusion, he argued that Father and Son could not be Co-eternal with One Another. A son comes into existence posterior to the father who begets him—so he argued about the Nature of Christ—and the fact that He is called the Son, that this term can be applied to Him at all, is proof that He came into being in time, not having existed before ; in a word, that He is the highest of creatures, not uncreated and divine ; of a different Nature from the Father, as not partaking with Him in essential, eternal Existence.

No fuller statement than this is needed for the moment at any rate. If the reader starts with this, all else will be intelligible to him. For the position, on this side at least, was as simple and as logical as possible. Once granted an absolute right to argue on facts about God as we argue about everything else, to apply to the mysteries of faith the same purely human logic as we use in mathematics or in philosophy, and the conclusion follows at once—He could not be the Son of God unless He came into being posterior to the Father Who begat Him. But to be posterior to God in time were to be inferior to Him in the order of being, and, therefore—so Arius reasoned—He cannot be spoken of as equal with the Father : He must be of a different Nature, must occupy a lower place in the hierarchy of ordered existence.

Such was the nature of the heresy itself. But, in dealing with the teaching of Arius, as with that of

every heretic who has ever troubled the Church, it is necessary to go farther than this. When we know what his teaching was, and how it differed from that of the Church, another question must follow—what constituted the motive of that teaching? A man does not deny or cry down what the Church has received and taught, without having somewhere in his mind a persuasion that he is doing God service, that he is freeing belief about Him from some element of falsehood or inconsistency, that he is saving some forgotten truth, that he is reducing some exaggerated statement to due sobriety and proportion. And it is only by crediting him with this, though he may seem to deserve it but little, that we can really understand his teaching, the influence that it had on men's minds, the difficulties of the Church in confuting it, the persistency with which it maintained itself in the teeth of her authoritative pronouncements.

Now, justice to the heretic Arius may be specially hard to mete out. It is true that he forfeited for himself the right to be mildly judged, by the hardihood, the irreverence, the impiety with which he attacked the truth. We know that he adopted such means as the writing of popular songs, to be sung by unlettered people, in unseemly places, on unfitting occasions, that he might bring his attacks on the truth to the ears and the understanding of all men. We know that the violence of his followers made the life of the saintly Athanasius a long and bitter martyrdom through many years of his Episcopate. And, therefore, if the memory of Arius has always been regarded in the Church as

that of a reckless unbeliever who rent the Church in two, not to save her doctrines from corruption but to gratify his vanity and self-will, we must consider that he himself was the person to blame for all this.

But it does not the less hold good that if we wish to understand the situation, we must look for some other motive behind the arch-heretic's teaching. "The world," said the great Athanasius, "shuddered and found itself Arian." And surely we cannot suppose that one-half of the Christian world was shaken in doctrinal belief, and seduced from Apostolic order, by nothing more potent or worthy than the vanity of a single presbyter of no very special gifts. Unless the teaching of Arius had fallen on soil prepared for it, it could not have sprung to life in results so widely spread. A fear must have been abroad in men's minds that the Church's belief about Christ was inconsistent with the Unity of God. That such fears were actually felt will be abundantly evident hereafter, when we touch on the various heresies which preceded the one in question.

But this, at least, is plain—the doctrine of our Lord's Divinity, as taught by New Testament writers, supplemented the older truth on which Christianity is based, the truth of the Oneness of the Godhead. How this truth could possibly be added to without being wholly contradicted, was the problem that called for solution.

Arius would have cut the knot in a crude and irreverent way, not even consistent with itself. He could not shake himself clear of the teaching with which he was surrounded, that Jesus Christ was to be worshipped.

While denying Him equality with the Father, he admitted Him to be in some sense Divine. And so he was rightly accused of upholding the Unity of God by denying the Eternity of the Son; while he himself, by maintaining as he did that Christ was still to be adored, was actually setting up two gods for the worship of Christian people. All this was strange and contradictory; it was at variance with the logical completeness with which he pursued the deductions to be drawn from the title, the Son; and yet it is true none the less that he believed himself to be rescuing the Church from worshipping a second God side by side with the Maker of all things.

But, whatever the motive may have been, the patent result was this, that the Church had but two alternatives—to establish her cherished beliefs, to justify her age-long adoration, by marshalling in well-weighed words the scattered statements of Scripture, in a formula suited to the times—or to abjure the beliefs about Christ on which Creed and worship were based.

But in effecting this necessary process a difficulty had to be encountered of a very special character. The issue was as simple as possible—was Christ to be worshipped as God, as Eternally one with the Father? The actual formula of Arian impiety was a denial of the Eternity of the Son, the assertion that “there was a time when He did not exist”. This, of course, was to deny Him equality with God, was to reduce Him to the status of a creature, albeit the most august of creatures. The Arians did, in so many words, deny Him Eternity of Being. But, when faced with the

logical issue that this was to make Him a creature, to refuse Him Divine honours, they tried to escape from the conclusion, while maintaining the premises which involved it. It was necessary to bring them to book, to force them to an absolute issue from which no escape should be possible. Yet no Scriptural term could be found whose conclusiveness they did not evade. All honours short of Divinity they were prepared to allow to our Lord. And every Scriptural term which accorded Him actual Divinity they were prepared to accept and to use, only mentally reserving to themselves the right to explain it away, to use it in a different sense from that in which Catholics understood it. Some word must, therefore, be found which should serve as a final test, leaving open no loophole for evasions. And here the grand difficulty came in. If no Scriptural term was forthcoming which would render evasion impossible, then another must be found or invented. And this was repugnant to many, and could not be thought of by any except as a necessary evil.

Nor did difficulties cease even here. There was actually a term in existence, the celebrated word, *Homoousion*, which means, "of the very same Nature," and this was exactly what was needed. But it had a doubtful record behind it: it had actually been proposed and rejected at a former important Council, as savouring too much of material associations. The occasion was the condemnation of Paulus of Samosata before two Councils held at Antioch in A.D. 264 and 269. This will be gone into in the next chapter, and need

only be mentioned here to show how the task of the Catholics was complicated by the history of the term. In this word, then, lay the key of the situation, but in it, again, lay its difficulty. The term was "suspect," from its previous associations, did not start with an unblemished record, was odious to many believers whose Creed included its meaning; above all, is not found in the Scriptures. And thus the upholders of the truth set out at a great disadvantage from the unpopularity of the term. It could be affirmed that the Catholics were innovators; that they were forcing on unwilling believers a word brought forward and rejected at a critical period in the past; that they were going beyond their authorities, were dogmatizing where Apostles had refrained.

Why, then, it may, perhaps, be asked, did the orthodox court complications by introducing this term at all costs? This question can only be answered by stating as briefly as may be the principle which guides the imposition of Creeds.

The difficulty which faced the Church, and the method by which it was solved, were new in the days of Athanasius; they have been sadly familiar since then. Definition for the sake of definition has never been part of her programme, whatever detractors may affirm, or rash adherents desire. She would fain be content with the Scriptures: she would trust and adore, not dogmatize, were she left in peaceful possession of what the Apostles bequeathed her. And in even her exactest definitions, with "warning clauses" attached, she is raising beacons for her children, to

show where dangers lie, not wilfully imposing burdens to weight their adoring souls.

But, beliefs about the things of God lie so far beyond our comprehension, that any conception of Him must needs combine in itself some aspects and elements of truth which we cannot reconcile with one another. It has been shown in the chapters above how inspired Apostles themselves use terms, to express these truths, which bring out such aspects alternately; how not even the grace of inspiration can lend to human language the power to express them simultaneously; how the terms thus alternately used must be combined, to modify each other, before we can use them aright; how the resolve to adopt any one of them, and to press it to its logical conclusions, unmodified by all the rest, must inevitably land us in error. This was just what Arius did. Adopting but one of these terms, the Title, Son of God, he argued about the Nature of Christ as though this single term, not modified by any of the rest, could be treated by ordinary logic and pressed to its ultimate conclusions. What the Church was guided into doing, under the leadership of the great Athanasius, was to decree, at the Nicene Council, that the conclusions thus arrived at were wholly false and misleading. And this she could not do without imposing on her children a test of doctrinal accuracy, to which all future times might appeal as having settled the question.

Herein lies the guiding principle of the drafting and imposition of Creeds. They add nothing to the statements of the Scriptures: they do but adapt them

at need to the varying thoughts and circumstances of the men of every age. And if these thoughts and circumstances require, in any one age, the adoption of formularies or terms not actually employed in Scripture, she claims as her absolute right the power to adopt new terms to express the ancient beliefs. Yet the adoption of each such term she regards as a necessary evil. She fain would avoid it if she might; she follows it as the second-best course when the best is no longer possible.

Such was the theological situation when the controversy with Arius came on. But, again, that controversy cannot be treated in purely theological terms. The political situation of the day must also be briefly set forth before the significance of the Nicene Council can be fully grasped or stated.

Constantine had attained to absolute Empire in A.D. 323. The last persecution of the Church was put down by him on his accession. Indeed, although not a Christian, not a member of the Church by Baptism, he was persuaded of the truth of Christianity. And he grasped the possibility of using the Church as a means for consolidating the Empire. Paganism had ceased altogether to be available for a purpose such as his. Outworn, discredited, decrepit, it had not the force or enthusiasm to serve any positive purpose by holding its votaries together, by inspiring community of ideas or by consolidating national life. Constantine divined at once how the Church, with its enthusiasm and its unity, could advance these political ends.

Two facts of immense importance, as characterizing

his tenure of power, increased the Emperor's desire to enlist an Established Religion in the work of consolidating his Empire. For many years before his accession, the Imperial Power had been held "in commission": two, sometimes even four, colleagues ruling under the titles of Augustus and Cæsar. Constantine had come to the throne to rule as a solitary autocrat, and this one fact in itself enhanced the need for unity in Religion to give solidarity to the Empire.

And, again, the genius of Constantine had transferred the seat of the Empire from Rome to Constantinople.

For more than a thousand years a single city on the Tiber had been establishing or maintaining itself as the centre of the world's civil life. It had no advantages of situation: its paramount influence on mankind had been due to one thing only, the genius and character of its people. And this had been now so entirely secured that it no longer depended at all on locality and old associations. ROME stood no longer for the name of a place so much as for a system, for ideas, for institutions, for forces, by which the world had been transformed. The actual administrative centre from which all these were directed must now be the Capital of the world, wherever it might actually lie. It was the glory of Constantine as a ruler, that it was he who discovered all this; that he had the needful audacity to dispense with any advantages which might still be inherent in locality, to decide that a malarious Italian city, on a river notorious for floods—a city whose distance from the sea had once

been a protection from pirates, but was now a sheer disadvantage—was no longer the necessary seat of all that was embodied for the world in the ancient name of ROME; that now it was open to its ruler to plant the Empire of the world at the spot whose natural advantages made him who could hold them and it the master of Europe and Asia.

And, indeed, the actual associations of the Rome of the early fourth century, so far from strengthening the Empire, were the greatest weakness it had. A degenerate Senate—an idle populace, brutalized by spectacular displays of mingled obscenity and cruelty—an ancient Religion which nobody believed, invaded on every hand by degraded cults from abroad—to be rid of all these had been a gain in itself.

But, even with these left behind, with Constantine as ruler of the world, and with Constantinople as his Capital, one thing was still to be desired to complete the consolidating work, the moral cohesion which a common Religion might give to all his dominions. The Church which, after ten persecutions, had conquered the world by endurance, the meek who had inherited the earth, the fervour, the progressiveness, the unity of belief which characterized the Christian Church, seemed to offer him all that he needed for adding this crowning touch to his work of unifying the civilized world. And Constantine, though not baptized, was, at any rate, a persuaded adherent of the Faith from which all might be expected.

But, no sooner had this fair prospect seemed fully assured to the Emperor, than he found that the Cath-

olic Church was itself being rent in twain by the strife about Arius and his teaching. Most naturally the earliest impulse of a statesman not wholly Christian was to treat a doctrinal controversy as a strife about words and names. He exhorted the Patriarch of Alexandria to come to terms with his heretical presbyter, and not to divide the Church about a question of mere abstractions. When this was proved to be impossible, the idea of a Council of Bishops, representing the Christianity of the world, soon dawned on the Emperor's mind, and it was actually on his initiative that the Nicene Council assembled. It met in the Cathedral of Nicea, just opposite Constantinople; being the first Œcumenical Council since that which had met at Jerusalem in Apostolic days, to settle the crucial question of the standing of Gentile converts.

Under such conditions, then, in the realms of Theology and of Politics, the Nicene Council met. It is a fact not a little remarkable, that the two most prominent personages at this Council composed of Bishops, were, one, a deacon and, the other, a catechumen. Its official President was Hosius of Cordova, an aged and venerable Bishop, who had suffered persecution for the Faith, and bore its marks on his body. But it was dominated by two personalities, the Emperor, a catechumen, on the side of the State, a deacon, St. Athanasius, on that of the Church. Athanasius, to be known for all time as he who took his stand against the world, was allowed to be present at the Council in attendance on the Patriarch Alexander of Alexandria, whom he was soon to succeed in

that See. But to him, under God, it was due, even then, that the orthodox conclusion prevailed.

The See of Rome was represented by deputies, its Bishop being hindered from attending by the infirmities of advanced old age.

The most prominent figure in opposition was Eusebius, Bishop of Nicomedia—Arius himself, being only a presbyter, had, of course, no seat on the Council. Among those who would have compromised if they could, the chief was another Eusebius, known then as the Bishop of Neocæsarea, but destined to wider fame as the Father of Ecclesiastical History.

Of the bulk of the Bishops who constituted the Council, it may be with safety affirmed that if they could have avoided a decision which would separate any from the Church, they would have greatly preferred to do so. Not that the doctrine of Arius, as nakedly stated by him, was other than abhorrent to their minds. But few had realized fully what it meant in itself and in its consequences; while many were strongly averse to defining the truth about Christ in words not strictly Scriptural, most of all by the word *Homoousion*. But, indeed, it may safely be asserted that in any great meeting of officials, lay or clerical, the number of those who would make for neutrality, who would avoid decided expressions, who would wish to agree with both sides, however contradictory their principles, who try to make things comfortable all round, is always likely to preponderate.

So it was at the first meeting of the Council. Eusebius of Neocæsarea took the lead in aiming at

compromise. It was actually round a Creed of his drafting that the final declaration was constructed. Of course, even the leaders of the Catholics would have been glad to sacrifice everything save the actual safety of the Faith for the sake of being inclusive, and of avoiding non-scriptural terms. But this, as we have seen, was impossible. For all these the Arians accepted, reserving, and that quite openly, the right to explain them away, and to put their own meaning upon them.

If Christ was affirmed to be the Image of God, so, they whispered, was every man. If it was claimed that He is the Power of God, so even were some lower creatures regarded and spoken of in the Scriptures. At length Eusebius of Neocæsarea proposed a formula to the Council, embodying a form of declaration which it was thought that every one could sign. The general orthodoxy of his principles was what gave him his hope of success. It was what made his intervention so dangerous to the uncompromising statement of the Faith. But, as it proved, his proposal of a Creed brought on the psychological moment for which its advocates were waiting. The Emperor himself intervened—being prompted, no doubt, by Hosius and Alexander—and proposed the adoption of Eusebius's Creed, *with the word HOMOOUSION added*. The original proposition disappeared, and the amendment, greatly amended, became the turning-point in the history of the Faith.

As soon as it became quite patent that Alexander and Hosius and their followers would accept nothing

less than the Homoousion, the waverers rallied to their side. They dared not support the blasphemies of Arius. And the choice, as they now discovered, was narrowed to a single alternative—Was Christ to be declared by the Council to be of the very same Nature with the Father, or was the Church to adopt as her own the watchword of the party of profanity, “there was a time when He did not exist”?

Face to face with this alternative, the immense majority of the Bishops did not need to hesitate for a moment. The Creed, as now amended, was adopted with about¹ seventeen dissentients. And of those who voted against it there were not found more than three who ultimately refused to sign it. These three, along with Arius, were sent into exile by the Emperor, and the victory of the Orthodox Party was apparently as complete as it could be.

Apparently—for a terrible reaction was to follow, and that very soon. That ultimate assent of the Body of the Faithful, which, after all, gives its binding force to any decree of a Council, was not to be secured for this one without a terrible struggle, during which it seemed more than once that Arianism had carried the day. Nothing else was, indeed, to be expected. The virtual presidency of an unbaptized Emperor at a Council of the Bishops of Christendom, is a perilous aid to the Church at a crisis in the history of the Faith, especially if siding against him be found to mean sentence of exile. And Nemesis followed accordingly.

¹ The actual number is variously stated; it was either thirteen, seventeen, or twenty-two.

The majority at the Council, it is true, had been composed of genuine Catholics ; not, as has been asserted, of secret Arians voting against their consciences to secure the Emperor's favour. But neither, again, was it composed of men persuaded in their hearts that the formula actually employed was the only safeguard of the Faith, apart from which it must be lost ; while dislike for the term HOMŌOUSION, on which everything ultimately turned, was strong, and far from unnatural, in the minds of many among them.

But, indeed, the causes for reaction lay deeper even than this—in human nature itself. The decided, the uncompromising, the fully-persuaded, are rare in every assembly. The half-hearted, the partly-persuaded, who do not wish to be too clear-sighted, who fail to see through evasions, who believe that you can say one thing and make everybody believe in the end that you may possibly have meant quite another, who shrink from all that is thorough, not because they do not believe it, but because they dislike having to say it—these form the majority everywhere, and so they did at Nicea. These follow a strong-willed leader while the spell of his presence is upon them, and then they fail to support him when a moment of trial comes ; because, though they have been run into his mould, they have not the solidity to hold fast in it.

Nor, again, on the intellectual side, do we find that any but the few are fully persuaded in their minds that only a thorough consistency will stand them in stead in the end, or will bring other people to their side. In the long run the world is logical : it sides, and sides very

steadily, with those who know their own minds : it ends by a contemptuous repudiation of compromising statements and half-hearted beliefs. But all this takes time to work out, and in the meantime the temptation is strong to suppose that it is possible to compromise, to hold two positions at once which are wholly incompatible with each other.

And so the Athanasian position, laid down in the Creed of Nicea, was adopted—as things are adopted when masterful personalities and favourable circumstances combine to enforce them on waverers. Then came the hour of looking back. They remembered that in the centuries before, when the Faith was not seriously challenged, there had undoubtedly been good men, intending to be loyal to Christ, who had not realized to themselves that He must be what Arius denied, and what the Church had now affirmed—although nothing less than this could make Him to humble believers, who look to Him for salvation, exactly the very Saviour Whom their trustful hearts demand. To go on maintaining all this, and maintaining that it must be laid down in a formula needed for the day ; that, whatever had formerly been the case, this Creed, and nothing else, would secure a saving Faith,—all this was too difficult, too dangerous, when the Emperor ceased to enforce it and Athanasius was a persecuted fugitive.

As the result, a struggle began in A.D. 328, within three years of the Nicene Council, and went on with varying results ; till the next Œcumenical Council, which met at Constantinople in A.D. 381, set the question finally at rest.

It appeared more than once in the interval, that all was finally lost, and that the triumph of the Arian party was complete all along the line. Even the influences making for the Faith were not always exceptionally pious ; though, on the whole, it may safely be said that it was a case of unscrupulous violence against humble, devout belief. The end was, as it ever must be, that the triumph lay with those who were

Fixed to hold Love's banner fast,
And by submission win at last.

NOTE.

The formula now recited at our Altars, and known as the Nicene Creed, was finally put into shape at the Council of Constantinople, in A.D. 381.

The Creed of the Nicene Council was as follows :—

“We believe in One God the Father Almighty, Maker of all things both visible and invisible. And in One Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten of the Father, only-begotten, that is of the Substance of the Father ; God of God, Light of Light, Very God of Very God, begotten, not made, of One Substance with the Father. Through Whom all things were made, both those in Heaven and those in earth ; Who for us men and for our salvation, came down, and was made flesh, and became Man ; Who suffered, and rose on the third day, and ascended into Heaven, and is coming again to judge quick and dead. And in the Holy Ghost. And those who say there was a time when He was not and that before He was begotten He did not exist, and that He was made out of nothing, or who say that the Son of God is of a different Essence or Substance, or that He is capable of conversion or change, these the Catholic and Apostolic Church anathematizes.”

The Creed of Constantinople omits, as no longer necessary, the anathemas laid down at Nicea. It asserts in fuller language the fact of the Incarnation, as taking place through the Holy Ghost, of the Virgin Mary; it asserts the session of Christ at the Right Hand of God, the glory with which He will return, and the eternity of His Kingdom; none of which facts about Him were stated in the Creed of Nicea. Its fuller statement of the Divinity of the Holy Ghost will be treated of in another place.

Besides this, it states the doctrine of Baptism, of the Resurrection of the dead and of the Life of the world to come.

It adds practically nothing to the Nicene assertions about the Nature and Divinity of our Lord. But, instead of first speaking of Him as begotten and then, immediately, as only-begotten, it first calls Him the only-begotten Son of God, and then amplifies this statement by affirming His Generation to be prior to Creation, "begotten of His Father before all worlds"—words which further suggest the great distinction between His being generated *of*, or rather *from* God, while all the Universe was made *by* God. And, again, the Fathers at Constantinople saw no necessity for affirming twice over His Identity of Substance with the Father.

The fuller statement of His Human Birth and of the part which His Mother had in it, and of the work of the Holy Spirit on her, would seem to be an anticipation of the controversies soon to follow, about the two Natures in Him and their true relation to each other.

CHAPTER XI.

EARLIER ABERRATIONS LEADING UP TO THE ARIAN HERESY.

BETWEEN the Age of the Apostles themselves and that of the Nicene Council, the problem to be solved by the Church in the region of doctrinal belief was how to reconcile the Divinity of Christ with the essential Unity of the Godhead. The outbreak of the Arian Heresy was only the concluding stage of many aberrations from the truth, some conscious, some only half-conscious. And apart from authoritative guidance these things could hardly be avoided. When crudely placed side by side, the two truths appear incompatible. They form one of the many antinomies, the true solution of which lies in holding both extremes, not in trying to compromise between them. But this can only be done at the cost of logical completeness ; by accepting a mystical position, where the needs of the spirit, not those of the understanding, are allowed to have the last word. And the acceptance of such a position demands both courage and humility beyond what many can rise to—the humility to accept what one cannot comprehend, the courage to leave the solution in the hands of the Author of Revelation.

Thus it is that in those early days the path towards

articulate belief, reconciling the opposing truths as far as it is possible to do so, was found by those thinkers alone who faced the ever-present difficulty in the spirit of the Scriptural writers. All truth about the Nature of God is handled by St. Paul and St. John as turning on a single point, the reconciliation of sinners to God. Our Lord, all through their Epistles, is, first and above all things, the Saviour. His Work for lost mankind is the one supreme object of their thought. It is in the course of enforcing this that they deal with abstract truths about Himself and His relations to the Father. They write of Him as the Agent of Creation, as the Eternal Word in communion with the Father, coming forth to call the world into being. They write of Him as the Son, whose Equality with the Father was an eternal possession and prerogative. But neither His Eternal Being nor His primal Work in Creation is the end and the ultimate object of anything which they tell us about Him. These truths are always introduced as the ground of our belief in Him as Saviour, or as the motive for following His example.

And so far as uninspired writers, in times when inspiration was withdrawn, are content with Apostolic methods and write with Apostolic objects, they follow along safe lines. It is when the thought of salvation, of the Work of Christ for the Race, of its application to individual souls, is abandoned for other speculations, that confusion and error creep in.

In the days before Nicea two lines of speculation were followed, out of which these errors grew—the

part of the Word in Creation, and the Eternal Relations of the Son to the Father ; each a necessary line to be pursued, if not undertaken for its own sake, but as ministering to the truth of salvation ; each leading the writer astray if pursued apart from that object.

Speculation on the functions of the Word as the Agent of the Father in Creation, if pursued for its own sake alone, makes for laying undue stress on one side of that truth about His Nature on which we have dwelt above. When He is called the Word of the Father, the Effulgence of His Glory, the Image of His Person, the very terms, if taken by themselves, would obscure the truth of His Personality, and reduce His essential Existence to a function in the Being of the Father. And to this did men's thoughts incline by a natural, inevitable process, if they dwelt too exclusively on His Work in Creation, reducing belief in the Redeeming Christ to a secondary place in their theology. But retain belief in His Saving Work as the primary article of the Creed, and He must ever be regarded as a Person eternally differentiated from the Father, though One with Him in Nature and in glory.

The adoring eye of the redeemed sees ever clearly before it " the Chiefest among ten thousand, the altogether lovely " ; and so cannot doubt for a moment that He is what Revelation makes Him, the Beloved of the Father from Eternity, as He is of His redeemed in time. The mere philosophical gaze, which dwells on His Work in Creation—a Work which entails no " emptying " of Himself, no stooping to, and bearing with sinners—can afford to entertain

the question, whether God as Creator of all things must needs have had ever with Himself any Being Whom He had not created ; whether the Word, the creative Agent, need necessarily be Personal from Eternity ; nay, whether we need think of Him as existing with any distinction from the Father before He came forth from the Eternal Silence to call the worlds into being. Such thought can reduce the Eternal Generation, in which the Church believes, to an act taking place in time, a precedent condition of the Father's Work in calling the worlds out of nothingness.

And so a distinction was drawn between the Word as existing in the Being of the Father (called in Greek the Logos Endiathetos) and the Word as proceeding from the Father, to act as His Agent in Creation (called in Greek the Logos Prophorikos). The Apologists and other writers who pursued this train of speculation are not to be thought of as heretics. They never, wilfully at least, contradicted the Church's belief, in which the Word is Co-eternal with the Father. They never wrote one irreverent word, or maintained one false proposition which the Church had considered and condemned. They were reverent and careful writers, desiring to maintain the Catholic Faith against Gnostics and other its impugnors, to recommend it to the heathen world, and to free the Church which held it from the false suspicions of those in authority. But if they did not fall into heresy they did come perilously near it when they spoke of our Lord as "a second God"—*deuteros Theos*.

This seems to have been an ill-judged attempt to save the truth of His Personality without denying His Godhead : it was not a wilful desertion of the doctrine of the Divine Unity, or a denial of His Oneness with the Father. There is of course a sense in which every Catholic thinker believes in Subordination within the Equality ; as he believes in Distinctions within the Unity. It is essential to belief in that Unity that we should hold that Son and Spirit derive Their Being from the Father ; Divine though that Being is. Now where there is Derivation of Being there must also be Priority and Subordination, and it is impossible to believe that thinkers so pious intended to go beyond this. But their over-assertion of Derivation and Subordination, their tendency to dwell too exclusively on the functions of the Word in Creation, did lead them within measurable distance of denying the Eternity of the Word and His absolute Equality with the Father.

Nor can it be doubted that the line which they adopted led up to the Arian Heresy by preparing the soil in which it grew. If the Relation between the Father and the Word implied no eternal Distinction, if an act of God, to be called Generation, be conceived to have taken place in time, with a view to the Creation of the world, then it would seem to introduce into the Godhead a Distinction which had not previously existed. From this the next step follows only too easily—the reduction of all that is revealed in the Scriptures about Fatherhood and Sonship in God to a merely temporal act, distinguished from that of Creation by a difference of degree and not of kind. In other words,

the impiety of Arius comes in imperceptibly and inevitably.

In the Faith of the Catholic Church, "the Firstborn before all Creation" (Col. I. 15) is differentiated from all the creatures as deriving His Being from the Father in Eternity, not in time. Once treat the Generation of the Logos as an act of the Father taking place in time, not Eternal to the Father as His own very Being, not Essential to Him as God, but designed as a step to the Act of Creation—once admit, we must say, a position such as this, and the next step follows inevitably—the Logos is only the first of creatures; first in dignity and worth, as first in order of time, but still not differing from them in aught but priority of creaturely existence. Generation which is temporal and not Eternal, Generation which is not essential, but only a step towards a further end, is only a splendid name for an act which, after all, was one of Creation, taking place, like all other Creation, in time; so that there must have "been a time when He did not exist," as the Arians blasphemously affirmed.

On the other side of the account, the Apologists and other writers who followed this line of thought did a service to the Catholic Faith which ought to be set to their credit. They opposed the Sabellian tendencies of their day by maintaining at least that the Incarnate Son was not identical in Person with the Father Who sent Him among us; that Jesus, Who spoke of the Father as having sent Him into the world, must be held to be differentiated from that Father by a veritable Distinction in Personality.

But in so far as they treated the thought of Creation as the leading, the regulative, idea which gives substance and content to belief in the Logos, so far as they consequently treated Generation as anything less than an Eternal Act, connatural to the Being of God, so far did they prepare a congenial soil into which the subsequent Arian Heresy struck a deep and flourishing root.

But Arianism struck another of its roots into an error the opposite of this ; which also flourished before Nicea. Speculation on the Nature of God, on the Relations of Personality within the Godhead, if indulged in for its own sake alone, without being subordinated entirely to adoring belief in Redemption, must lead to erroneous conclusions as surely as speculation about Creation. It is strictly, nay, solely, in connexion with Redemption that the Son and the Spirit are revealed to us. Apart from His Coming as Incarnate, the Son, as distinguished from the Father, was never revealed to the world. So neither was God the Spirit, apart from His Outpouring on Redeemer and redeemed.

The answer put into our mouths when first we learn of the Three Persons, expresses with strict correctness the attitude of the Church towards their Self-revelation. And not children only but adults, not only individual adults but the whole community of Christian people, has learnt to believe before all things in "God the Father, Who hath made us and all the world ; in God the Son, Who hath redeemed us and all mankind ; and in God the Holy Ghost, Who sanctifieth us and all the elect people of God". In

order to maintain this practical belief, to keep hold of the personal relations into which it brings us with God, it is necessary to follow it out to the conclusions which the Church maintains in the region of doctrinal truth. But the practical, the redemptive, aspect is essentially the foundation of all the rest ; its maintenance is the only object with which the rest have been thought out. Nay, its practical bearing on heart and life is the only excuse for its speculative treatment, the only test of the truths of Revelation which doctrinal definitions bring out.

And this is why it is that, as has been shown above, the reception of a truth by the Church is the necessary ultimate test to be applied to its definition by a Council. The devotional consciousness of the Christian Community receiving the Godhead of Christ as enunciated by the word *Homooousion*, the testimony of the simplest with the most learned, that apart from such enunciation they could not have believed in Him as Saviour, is that which has made the Definition the lasting heritage of the Church. And why?—because Redemption and Adoration, which belong to all Christians alike, and not the technical knowledge confined to the learned few, is the beginning, the end, and the test of theology. Speculation apart from this is not only perilous but disastrous.

It ought not to surprise us then if such speculation before Nicea led up to the blasphemies of Arius more surely, and with graver peril, than those of the Apologists and others on the share of the Word in Creation. The subject is more abstruse and mysteri-

ous : it lies beyond the scope of human cognition more completely than even the other. For Creation touches us nearly ; we have at least a direct concern with it ; it bears on finite matters on one side at least of its truth. Whereas the Relations within the Godhead are wholly Eternal and Divine : they are, to repeat it again, revealed in immediate connexion with Redemption ; otherwise they lie hid in the depths of the Divine, into which we cannot penetrate. For "the Heaven and the Heaven of Heavens are the Lord's thy God ; the earth hath He given to the children of men" (Deut. x. 14).

The Problem rashly attacked by these unauthorized speculators was, how to reconcile the Divinity of Christ with the primary truth of the Unity of God. Adoration was, as we have seen, the instinctive attitude of Christian souls when they communed with the Master Unseen. By a similar intuitional power, which we speak of as plenary inspiration, the gift of God the Holy Ghost, a St. Paul or a St. John used language about Him which acknowledged Him One with the Father. To meet the spiritual needs which arose in their growing churches, they drew out their intuitional beliefs into language expressing such Relations as these—Unity in Diversity, Subordination in Equality, Community of Nature with Derivation of Being. This language has ever been taken as justifying the worship of Christ without prejudice to the Unity of God. But then it was never once used in the interests of speculative theology. A code of spiritual ethics, a communion of creature redeemed

with Creator stooping to redeem, a dependence of sinful humanity on sinless Incarnate Divinity, form the sole and ultimate objects at which each Apostle aimed when writing about the Nature of his Master. These objects he was led to set before him ; to these he was guided in safety by the Spirit Who brooded over the Church. It is when, unguided by the Spirit, and with only a theological motive, "the intellectual power goes sounding on, a perilous way," when it aims at abstract truth and not at adoring trust, that heresies are bound to result. Twin truths within the sphere of Revelation may be mutually irreconcilable by any intellectual process of which we men are capable. Yet, held by submission of the understanding, as each in its own way true, they can be blended by a devotional synthesis into unity in the region of the spirit. But when any desires to reconcile them at the cost of the completeness of either, then the Church steps in with a "warning clause"; she requires him to cease from disturbing her children by mutilating God's Revelation.

The attempt, as made in this case, had its issue in two trains of reasoning alike incompatible with Revelation, alike depriving God's children of the blessing of what He has revealed.

On one side lay the heresy of Paulus of Samosata, who virtually reduced the Redeemer to the level of ordinary manhood.

On the other, that of Sabellius, who reduced the Son and the Spirit from Persons, to mere functions of the Godhead. These titles, he virtually said, are only

symbolical terms, expressing, under the figure of personality, the relations of One Divine Being to our poor, finite selves.

Now opposite as these two heresies may appear to have been to one another, they are but divergent branches which sprang from a common stem. They represent two different methods of protecting the Unity of the Godhead from the supposed depravation entailed on it by the doctrine of our Lord's Divinity.

The first retained His Personal existence as distinct from the Father Who sent Him ; but only by denying that He was sent from God except as all prophets are sent, as a man with a Divine message received by communion with God.

The other maintained His Divinity ; but at the cost of denying the Distinction which obtains between Sender and Sent. It is known by the name of Patripassianism. It denied any Personal distinction between the Father and the Son, and yet it maintained the Divinity of Christ. But, if He Who was crucified be Divine, while yet there is no real distinction between Him and God the Father, it is plain that by asserting His Divinity we affirm that the Father suffered—which is the meaning of the word Patripassianism.

It is plain how the first of these tendencies, as evinced by Paulus of Samosata, led straight to the Arian Heresy. Had it gained any serious hold in the Church, the action taken at Nicea might have been called for some sixty years earlier. But Paulus was a poor, weak creature, and gained so small a following that, in its direct effects, his heresy did little mischief.

In another, an indirect way, it did all but irreparable harm: it complicated the work of the Nicene Council by discrediting the word *Homooousion*. When a Council was assembled at Antioch in the year 264, to deal with the heresy of Paulus, the word was proposed by the orthodox Bishops for defining the Nature of the Son as absolutely equal with the Father. But the Council refused to accept it, on the ground that the associations of *ousia* (the Greek word for being, or substance) were of too material a kind to allow of its application to the Godhead. And so when the time came on, in A.D. 325, when no other word but this could save the Catholic Belief, St. Athanasius and those who supported him had to meet the *prima facie* objection that the word had been brought forward and rejected some sixty years before, by an honoured and orthodox Council, when dealing with a similar emergency.

Thus the share of Paulus of Samosata in hindering the Church's beliefs from finding their full definition was chiefly of an indirect kind. It was a large share all the same; because two things were mainly accountable for the reaction which followed the Nicene Council. If the first was dislike of committing the Church to a term not found in the Scriptures—and indeed a dislike to committing the Church to any definition whatever which was not universally acceptable—the second was the stigma attached at Antioch to the indispensable word *Homooousion*.

The Sabellian or Patripassian Heresy demands a few words of separate treatment. If Paulus maintained

the Unity of God at the cost of denying the Divinity of Christ, Sabellius sought to maintain it by denying His distinct Personality. A Catechism drawn up on his lines would substitute a formula something like the following for the answer quoted above. "I learn first, to believe in God as Father, because He made me and all the world; second, to believe in God as Son, because He came lowly into the world to redeem me and all mankind; and, third, to believe in God as Holy Spirit, because He inspires and sanctifies me and all the elect people of God."

This did not deny the Divinity of Christ in the same direct way as Paulus or as Arius impugned it. But by denying His distinct Personality it led up to the denial of His Divinity.

First, it leaves no motive or object for believing it. The motive present to the early Christians was the intuitive sense that a Redeemer from sin, Who Personally brings us to God by offering Himself as our Sacrifice, could be no other than Divine; that none but the Father's Equal could mediate between Him and a fallen world. And the strength of this adoring intuition lay only in the sense of Redemption as standing supreme in the affairs of the soul; as that to which all else leads in our dealing with the things of God; as the beginning, middle, and end alike of Religion and of Theology. Divert the eye from this, and fix it in intellectual contemplation upon any, the sublimest, mystery in the Nature of the Godhead Itself, and the motive for belief in the Divinity of the Saviour must vanish, or at least become inoperative. This lost, the belief itself is bound

to drop out of sight. It is a doctrine hard to hold and to reconcile with other beliefs. Why should it be held at all, apart from the constraining motive of adoring gratitude to the Saviour? Why should we not go straight forward on the line of least resistance and drop, as an unnecessary burden, a tenet so obscure and so exacting?

In this way, then, among others, Sabellianism led up to Arianism. It set out to reconcile two truths, apparently incompatible with one another, as an exercise in theological subtlety. It found that in treating them thus it cut away the only motive for desiring to hold them simultaneously. And so it dropped altogether the one more recently and more specially revealed. It ceased to believe in a Saviour Who, being Himself Divine, is yet so distinct from the Father as to have Relations with Him for effecting the salvation of the world. As a consequence, the Arian assault on the Church's belief in her Lord was delivered against a body with impaired beliefs, whose motive for holding Him Divine had become perceptibly weakened.

But this was not all the disservice that it did to the Catholic Faith. In its extremer form, Patripassianism, it cut away the ground on which belief in the Incarnation rests. It is manifestly repugnant to the Christian consciousness to think of God as Incarnate, apart from some Personal Distinction within the Godhead Itself. This will have to be treated hereafter as a substantive part of our theme. Be it spoken of here in passing, as a matter rather of instinct than of reasoned theological belief.

Let any reverent Christian but put this question to himself—Can I think of the Incarnate Saviour as God in every, the most inclusive, sense in which I can use the word GOD? Can I conceive of Human Nature as united in such sort with GOD that the God-Man here upon earth should have no Deity above Him, to Whom to look up as distinct from Himself? Can I think for an instant of Jesus as being in such wise God as that He could not have spoken with naturalness and truth about God having *sent* Him into the world? Is not, in other words, the idea of a Mission into the world a part and an essential part of any idea of Incarnation which shall not be utterly shocking to a well-trained Christian heart? The meaning of the instinct is briefly this, that the Eternal Derivation of Nature, which we call the Generation of the Son, is an essential precedent condition to reverent belief in the Incarnation of God.

But this is not the place for discussing this subject at length. Suffice it here to point out that Sabellianism, in the form of Patripassianism, prepared the way for the Arian Heresy by rendering the idea of Incarnation repugnant to reverent minds; by degrading it, as we see that it did when it denied the Distinction of Persons Eternally Subsisting in the Godhead. If the Eternal Godhead be thought of as a Monad, with no Distinction of Persons, it is easier for a reverent mind to deny the Incarnation altogether than to believe that Jehovah, as known to Moses, became Man, lived here and died.

In so far as the Sabellian Heresy made the thought

of Incarnation impossible, it prepared the way for Arianism. For Arianism, although in a different way, denied the truth of the Incarnation. It treated the Person of Immanuel as other than truly Divine.¹

¹ For the materials of the above chapter a great debt is owed to the masterly Introduction to some treatises of St. Athanasius written by Dr. Robertson, Bishop of Exeter, and published by Messrs. Cassells & Co.

CHAPTER XII.

THE DOCTRINE OF THE SPIRIT IN THE NEW TESTAMENT.

A REASONED, systematic Theology was not in itself an object to the Church in Apostolic days. Its worship of Christ as God was rather an instinctive necessity, a tribute of grateful love, than a conscious apotheosis thought out before it was effected.

And yet, as we have seen above, this instinct, if challenged, could account for itself ; and, if applied for an ethical purpose, could express itself articulately and confidently. Before the Apostles passed away they had left on record for the Church beliefs about the Godhead of Christ, expressed for such purposes as these. And their language is hardly less clear for being incidental in its outcome, and for having as its interest and motive not so much an ordered theology as practical and devotional satisfaction.

If belief in the Divinity of Christ was left in this condition, expressed in the interests of men's souls, and not in those of their understanding, still more must we expect to find that what was believed of the Holy Spirit is rather to be inferred from incidental expressions than found set forth as a Creed.

But it is the thoughts thus held in solution, not

those which have been crystallized into systems, which form the most pervading element in the minds of those who hold them. They are rather a condition of their thinking than an inference drawn from premises. And to doubt, or to treat as uncertain their place in the mind of the Church in the days when the Apostles wrote, were to read into an age of great thoughts the conditions of quite other times. An age of creation and an age of formulation are totally different from each other, and approach things in different ways. In the days when Creeds were put together the beliefs which formulas omitted may not be taken for granted as forming an element of belief. But this is a different thing from approaching the Apostolic age with the assumption that everything believed will be found set forth in order, and tabulated as a record for the future.

How then is the doctrine of the Spirit to be looked for in the writings of that age? What Christ Is in Himself and to His own comes out in them at every point, and we call it Apostolic Christology. And the expression of these great truths forms undoubtedly the kernel and the gist of the religious thought of that day. But how Christ becomes to us what He Is, how He reaches out to us, and how we become related to Him, this also comes out very clearly for those who have eyes to see it. And it is from this, as it occurs incidentally, with little of formulated enunciation, that we gather what was believed about the Person of God the Holy Ghost.

In the earliest consciousness of the Church there is a sense that our relations with Christ, maintained in

His absence from earth, are accounted for by the Presence of Another, sent forth to take His place. Her first start in practical work, in addressing the world in His Name, is deferred, by His command, till the blank of His Own withdrawal is supplied by the Coming of the Comforter. But this once for all effected, the link with Him is so close that the Apostles, in healing the sick, disclaim, as personal to themselves, the power by which it was effected, and assert that all that they have done is to bring Jesus Christ, out of sight, to bear on the visible world.

Apart from the Pentecostal Manifestation there is nothing in the history of the miracle, nor in the words elicited by it, to introduce the conception of the Spirit as accounting for the power displayed. But if the two be taken together they form a connected whole, in which the Inspiring Spirit is found to be the mediating Agent between Christ in Heaven and His Church on earth ; so that He is the ultimate Worker in that which is done in His Name.

And, again, in practical work, in administering discipline or in deciding vexed questions, the power on which the Church relies is not that of the Master directly but that of His Spirit in her midst. It is to Him and not to Christ that Ananias is said to have lied when he tried to deceive the Church. And then St. Peter goes on to use the still stronger expression, "thou hast not lied unto men but unto God" (Acts v. 4). The Being Who resides in the Church to keep her in communion with Christ is spoken of as early as this in terms of actual Divinity. The verse, if

taken alone, might not bear this meaning unmistakably, but it makes an unquestionable link in a chain of cumulative evidence that the Church of the earliest days believed in a Presence in her midst, uniting her with Jesus unseen, which was Personal and more than human. It bears on the Divinity of the Spirit as implicitly held from the first.

A similar bearing is found in the words sent out to the Church on the exemption of Gentile converts from bondage to the Law of Moses: "It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us" (Acts xv. 28). This is no rhetorical expression, personifying corporate action: it sets forth the decision of the Church as bringing into actual exercise the promise of Jesus Christ about the Presence of the Comforter in His stead, that His Church should be guided and inspired by the Personal Presence of the Paraclete, Whom He would send in His Name.

These historical notices in the Acts have a special value of their own as bringing out, half-consciously and by the way, the habitual attitude and tone of the Apostolic mind. But we naturally turn to the Epistles for fuller statements in words as to what the Church believed about the Person and Work of the Holy Spirit.

The materials, it must be admitted, are not so abundant nor so easy to handle as those examined above, where the Divinity of Christ was in question. There is not a single passage in the great Epistle of St. John to which we can appeal quite certainly, as speaking of a Personal Being, distinct from the Father

and the Son. In the light of the Church's belief, we can read in several places a mention of such a Being (1 John iv. 2, 13 ; v. 6, etc.). But these are only confirmatory of evidence derived from elsewhere. Not one were conclusive by itself.

We are carried farther than this by passages in the Epistle to the Hebrews. There He Who inspired the Old Testament is spoken of three times over with that twofold use of the definite article—"The Spirit Who is Holy" (Heb. iii. 7 ; ix. 8 ; x. 15) forms the English equivalent—which always indicates that a Personal Being is in question. And Christ is said to have offered Himself to God "through Eternal," or, "through *an* Eternal, Spirit" (Heb. ix. 14); while those who deliberately reject salvation are spoken of as "trampling under foot the Son of God" and "doing despite unto the Spirit of Grace" (Heb. x. 29)—a collocation which could hardly have been made unless a Personal Spirit were intended.

The Epistles of St. Peter, again, contain words which, in a Christian context, can only bear one meaning.

His strongest and clearest teaching is to be found in the first chapter, in the passage where the prophets are said to have "searched diligently . . . what time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did point unto when it testified beforehand of the sufferings of Christ and of the glory that should follow" (1 Peter i. 10, 11); which words are followed almost immediately by the statement that those who had taught the persons addressed had done so "by the Holy Ghost sent down

from heaven " (1 Peter i. 12). And these words are hardly stronger than those which, in the fourth chapter, speak of "the Spirit of glory and of God resting upon" the faithful (1 Peter iv. 14).

But it is to St. Paul that we turn for our fullest light. To his devotional thought the Holy Spirit of God is unquestionably and habitually present as a Person, as a Source of activity and a centre of life, in some distinct sense from other Personalities and Operations within the Divine Nature. This is true in spite of the fact that even here the evidence is less clear than that for the Divinity of Christ. How mystical soever the relations between us and the glorified Saviour of which the Apostle may be writing, still Jesus, the Man of men, the Human Friend of some still living, is always to be clearly distinguished from those who are incorporated into Him. He is in them and they in Him, but it is never doubtful for a moment that it is no mere mystical being, no idealized over-self, no set of ideals and aspirations, which are meant when Christ is spoken of.

But constantly, when we read of the Spirit, we are compelled to inquire, with care, whether the connotation of the term is strictly personal or no. For several consecutive verses it may mean the human spirit, the part of each of ourselves which is susceptible of Divine Indwelling and responsive to Divine appeals. And then this meaning shades off into one which can only be described as being rather the Operation of God, as He stirs in the hearts of His own; more a term for the blessed relations which obtain between Him and

ourselves, than the Name of a Personal Being distinguishable from the Father and the Son; a stronger word for grace, not the title of One Who bestows it. And then, without warning or explanation, it is used in a third signification, as the Name of a Personal Agent, Who acts on us from God, on God from us and in us. (See p. 215, below.)

And this is especially true of the greatest passage of all, the one in the Epistle to the Romans which contains the quintessence of the Apostle's teaching (Rom. viii. 4-18). In this the three senses indicated above keep shading one into the other. And yet the general result is to make it perfectly plain, foregone conclusions apart, that besides meaning a part of ourselves, and besides meaning an influence from above, the word Spirit¹ is repeatedly used as indicating a Personal Being with Whom we men are in communion. This Being is distinguishable from the Father and the Son. His action on the spirit of man forms, in the conception of St. Paul, a constant, necessary link in that mediatorial connexion, through which, while still on earth, we are joined to our Father in Heaven, in virtue of the Work of His Son.

Perhaps the two most crucial passages for testing the usage of St. Paul are those in the Romans and the

¹ There is a well-known rule for the interpretation of the word—that when Spirit is used with no article preceding, it means the Spirit of man, or else the gift of His Spirit as an influence of God on man; whereas THE Spirit, used with the article, is to be read with a Personal signification. But the rule has to be modified in actual application.

Galatians, where he writes of the Spirit of God as inspiring or re-enforcing our prayers, nay, as praying Himself in us. That in the Galatians is the simpler of the two. In it we are told that our status as sons brings it about that "God sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying Abba, Father" (Gal. iv. 6). Here the word Spirit is preceded in Greek by the definite article ; it is THE Spirit of God's Son that is sent forth, and He Himself not only enables us to call on God as our Father, but Himself so calls in us. Than this hardly anything could be stronger. The Apostle assumes in these words, as a fact requiring no statement, but familiar to the minds of his readers, that besides the Father and the Son, there is in the Being of God a Person Whose Name is THE SPIRIT ; and, further, that the work of the Spirit is something proper to Himself within the action of the Godhead. The passage in the eighth of the Romans must be read in the light of this one. It is preceded by many verses in which the Spirit of God is rather an influence than a Person, a standard and ideal to which to conform, not definitely a Person conferring it. But in the eleventh verse "the Spirit of Him Who raised up Jesus from the dead" is said to dwell in us, and His indwelling is made the condition and the agency of our being raised in like manner. Then there follow two or three verses in which the writer reverts to discoursing of the Spirit as a standard and an influence rather than a Person (12-15). Next he uses about that influence the very same expression which he had used of the Personal Spirit in the parallel passage in Galatians : "Whereby

we cry Abba, Father". And on this, with its suggestion of a Person, there follows the unmistakable expression : "THE Spirit Himself beareth witness with our spirit that we are children of God" (Rom. VIII. 61).

Next perhaps in importance to these, comes the place in the First Epistle to the Corinthians where we read that "the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God," and are told that "even as none among men knoweth the things of a man save the spirit of the man that is in him, even so the things of God none knoweth save the Spirit of God" (1 Cor. II. 10, 11). What gives this passage its crucial importance is the parallel between the spirit of a man, as distinguished from the rest of his personality, and One Who is called the Spirit of God ; for this directly indicates a distinction within the Godhead, affirms that a Being called the Spirit carries on some mysterious action within the Divine Nature, which belongs to Himself alone.

The teaching, then, of St. Paul about the Person and Work of the Holy Ghost forms the fullest and plainest record of what the Church believed, as it is found in her authoritative teaching in the Apostolic age.

It remains to examine the source from which that teaching was derived.

Apart from the Words of our Lord, stored up by St. John in his memory through his lengthened life of work, and brought out in his extreme old age for the permanent guidance of the Church, we should find the teaching of St. Paul unintelligible, because not accounted for. When read in the light of those words,

it all falls into its place ; we discern that at his conversion he found himself brought into a Church whose life, whose belief, whose experience was steeped in these promises of Christ.

But indeed they do more than account for the explicit teaching of the Epistles. They account for that Work of the Spirit which we find to be taken for granted in the written words of the Apostles, and which pervades the life of the Primitive Church, as recorded historically in the Acts ; which appears as the background, the atmosphere, the personal experience, assumed to pervade the corporate life of the persons addressed in the Epistles.

Nor have we been left by God without the connecting link which joins the record of St. John to the body of Apostolic writings more immediately connected with St. Paul.

It is of crucial importance to us that such a link should exist, that the cycle of History and Letters which gives us our knowledge of St. Paul should contain some actual reference to the promises recorded by St. John. For the difference in tone and handling which marks off the writings of St. John from everything else in the New Testament is altogether too great, nay, too startling, to let us dispense with a point of connexion to bring the two cycles together.

It is supplied, in two different passages, by St. Luke, the Evangelist and Historian. Briefly, at the end of his Gospel, more explicitly, at the beginning of the Acts, he assumes, and actually refers to, some promise made by our Lord about the Coming of the

Spirit from the Father. Being about to portray a Church which was founded, sustained, inspired by the Personal Presence of the Spirit, he naturally concludes the memoirs of his Gospel and begins the narrative of the Acts, by referring to the promises of Christ, fulfilled when the Spirit came. "Behold, I send the promise of My Father upon you : but tarry ye in the city, until ye be clothed with power from on high" (St. Luke xxiv. 49). So it runs at the end of his Gospel. "He charged them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father : which, said He, ye heard from Me" ;—"Ye shall receive power when the Holy Ghost is come upon you" (Acts i. 4, 8) : so he quotes the parting words of our Lord in the earliest verses of the Acts.

Even in their shorter form the words refer unmistakably to something promised by God, on which the work of the Church depended. In the second, longer recension, they explicitly speak of a promise by Christ, given at a definite time, and now to be shortly redeemed.

In view of this twofold reference, it is impossible to treat the discourses in St. John as invented in later days to account for the Doctrine of the Spirit as found in the Catholic Church. For all that he has preserved is assumed by the earlier writer as leading to the birth of a Church whose life depended from the first on a Presence sent from on high, as promised by Christ in St. John. And that promise is not only referred to as known to the persons addressed, it is actually referred to by the Speaker.

To pass, then, to those promises themselves :—

St. John xiv. 16, 17, 26 ; xv. 26 ; xvi. 7-15. It were not too much to affirm that unless they refer to a Person, and not to an influence alone, then words may be abandoned for ever as a means of expressing thought ; that if that Person be not Divine, then a studied obscurity of language must have wrapped our Lord's inner meaning from those who were hanging on His lips.

Not that He was fully understood at the time. Apart from the dullness of His hearers, never more conspicuous than then, they were still without the knowledge which alone could secure their understanding Him. But the words were words for all time, to be read, for their full comprehension, in the light of subsequent history. And if they did not refer to a Person, or if that Person be not Divine, then nothing of after-reflection in the light of greater knowledge could lead to their being understood. Nay, the more people learnt to believe about our Lord, and about what He was to the world, the more deeply they must misunderstand Him if such were not His meaning. For this at least He plainly said—that it was actually “expedient for the Twelve that He should go away ” (St. John xvi. 7), as the condition of the Spirit coming—He Himself, Whose accompanying with them had changed their every thought about God and man and life. They were gaining a dim apprehension that He was something more than man. They were to learn in increasing measure what that difference really meant. What then could they possibly understand, either then

or by after-reflection, from the Presence of the Comforter with them being treated as something more blessed than even that of their Lord? Surely nothing could exhaust the words, could make them even approximately true, except that He Who was to come was not less truly Divine, and should be even more intimately present, than He Who was taking His departure? Proceeding from the Father (St. John xv. 26), and sent by the Father in the Name of Jesus the Christ (St. John xiv. 26), Whom their hearts had learnt to adore; guiding the faithful into all truth (St. John xvi. 13), convicting the world of all evil (St. John xvi. 8)—a Being Who fulfilled in His Acts the conditions indicated thus could be of no other Nature than that of the Father Who sent Him and the Son in Whose Name He was sent.

The preservation of these few sayings as bequeathed by our Lord to His own, accounts, then, for everything that we read in the fervent utterances of St. Paul about the Spirit as a Person and a Divine Person. Nor will aught make St. Paul's belief intelligible but the assumption that at his conversion he was baptized into a corporate Body in which these truths about the Spirit were taught as a matter of course.

To sum up our interrogation of the Scriptures on primitive belief in the Trinity. There comes out for the most part incidentally, but sometimes of deliberate purpose, a pervading belief in two things—in what Jesus the Christ had become to the Church, and in another transcendent fact which accounts for His being her All in All; which fact is the Personal work of the

Holy Ghost. From the first of these we assuredly gather that He was adored as Divine ; from the second, that the Spirit was regarded by the faithful as equal in Nature with Him and with the Father.

The first comes out more clearly as being the pervading thought of all the Apostolic writings. Nor could this fail to be the case. It was " that which they had seen and heard, that which they had seen with their eyes, which they beheld and their hands handled about the Word of life " (1 St. John I. 1), which chiefly occupied their thoughts, and which they were chiefly concerned to declare. And in the course of realizing and declaring this, it was the truths concerning His Nature, and accounting for His Manifestation, on which they must primarily dwell.

But this could not fully come out, without bringing home to their hearts that the Saviour was more than man.

Nor could this last be fully declared as their message to those who believed, without their being forced to reflect on the Agency through which they communicated with Jesus now glorified. Nor were they in any more doubt about the Nature of the intermediate Agent than about that of the Master Himself, with Whom they were knit up by His activity. How could they be in doubt, if they let themselves reflect at all upon what that Agent was effecting for them, and on the all-but dying Words in which their Master had promised that such an Agent there should be?

So it is that, side by side with their intuitive beliefs about their Lord, and about what He was to the

Church, they give us from time to time, with greater or with lesser clearness, incidental, and therefore the more valuable, indications as to how the Spirit the Comforter was thought of habitually by them.

From a careful survey of these, we can draw but one conclusion, that He was regarded by them as One in Essential Nature with the Father Who sent Him to the Church, and with the Son in Whose Name He was sent.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE DIVINITY OF THE HOLY GHOST IN THE CREEDS OF THE CHURCH.

CONTROVERSIES about the Divinity of Christ were long and varied and acrimonious. No question regarding the Godhead of the Holy Ghost ever seriously divided the Christian World.

When the question was actually raised, well on in the fourth century, in the Patriarchate of Constantinople, it was settled quickly and easily. Nor is it hard to divine why things fell out in this way ; how it was that while Arianism divided all Christendom, Macedonianism, the denial of Divinity to God the Holy Ghost, never caused any serious difficulty—formed little, indeed, but a complicating episode in a controversy regarding the Incarnation.

The stumbling-block to faith in the Divinity of Christ is the palpable fact of His Humanity, and the difficulty of reconciling this with Eternal, Divine Existence. No such difficulty arises when we think about God the Holy Ghost. That God should dwell within men, to fill them with supernatural holiness, is in every way easier of belief than that God should come among men, as Man, that He should stoop, in His longing to redeem them, to take their Nature into union with Him-

self. The taking of Humanity into God is a miracle far more stupendous, more staggering to reason, more taxing to faith, than the unseen pervasion of our nature by His Spirit dwelling within us.

That a helpless Babe, a growing Boy, a weary Man, a dying Martyr, should indeed be "God of God, Light of Light, Very God of Very God," is a truth which can only be received when the conscience of sinners has been roused, and the faith of saints worked up, into believing that thus and thus only could the Love of God for man and the need of man for God be completely met and satisfied.

A Mystery such as this once received, it needs comparatively little persuasion to induce the minds which have grasped it, and the souls which have been satisfied by it, to believe that it is God Himself Who indwells, and sanctifies, and transforms them.

Again, another great stumbling-block to faith was the acceptance, in any form, of the principle of Plurality of Persons within the Unity of the Godhead, as not contradicting our faith in that Unity.

The decrees of Nicea once accepted, this principle was absolutely established as part of the Catholic Faith. But if Plurality be in any sense compatible with Unity, it is no greater strain upon faith to believe God THREE IN ONE than to believe that the Man Christ Jesus existed from Eternity as God. The additional article of faith which ascribes like Godhead to the Spirit, Who was promised and sent by Him, seems to follow quite naturally on this.

Now the heresy known as Macedonianism, the

refusal to believe in the Godhead of the Spirit, arose in the Eastern Church, or at least became to some degree prominent there, long after the Council of Nicea had pronounced on the Divinity of Christ. And it arose among the party known as Semiarians, who would not accept the Nicene Decrees as far as the Homousion was concerned. Admitting our Lord to be in some sense Divine, they yet refused to accept the belief that He is Very God from Eternity, and that His Godhead differs from that of the Father in a single point alone—that the Father receives It of none, while the Son receives It of the Father.

By the date of the Second Œcumenical Council, which met at Constantinople in A.D. 381, the Semiarians were a small and discredited party, not bold enough now quite to break with the Church, yet not frank enough to acknowledge themselves beaten, and to accept the Homousion as truth. Indeed their heresy had ceased to be the one which called for the chief attention of the Church: nor did it constitute the most imminent danger to be met and averted by the Council. The declaration of the perfect Godhead of our Lord had elicited, by a natural reaction, doubts and disputes about His perfect Humanity. And the Council was primarily called to declare Him “Perfect Man: of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting,” as against the heresy of Apollinaris, who taught that the Divinity in Him took the place of a human soul.

To put the same thing in a different form. If we have learnt to believe in Divine Activity as manifested

in a single Act, an Act which is not exhausted in the process, but which abides in an objective Result—which Result we call His Word or Reason—while yet it can itself be conceived of and described as a form of Divine Activity, if we have learnt to believe in the same Result as having objective Existence, yet not so as to cease to be an Activity, then it is little more trial of faith to carry this one step farther, and to believe that in the Essential Life of God there are two such Acts and two such Results.

It was pronounced, in effect, at Nicea, that God the Eternal Father is ever essentially realizing Himself, fulfilling His Divine Perfection, in an Act of Reason or Contemplation, objective, Personal, Divine ; which is not other than Himself, yet is not wholly identical with Himself ; which is His Son as well as His Word.

It was plain from study of the Scriptures, as now for three centuries and a half brooded over in the thought of the Church, that besides this Eternal Act, which is also an Eternal Person, the Word, there is also another Act, not identical with this, distinguishable, and distinct, from this ; that Another besides the Son is spoken of as Himself Divine, the Paraclete, the Inspirer, the Comforter. That as the Father eternally generates from Himself the Son, His Personal Word, so also, not from Himself alone, but from Himself through the Medium of the Son, there proceeds another Act which is, in like manner, Personal and Divine ; that the Pneuma, the Breathing, the Spirit, continually spoken of in Scripture, is an Act not exhausted in the result,

a Result which is still an Activity, in a word, is a Person within the Godhead.

Now had this been propounded to the Church as a truth to be received and believed, before a declaration of a Council had set forth any similar Personal Act as plainly taught in the Scriptures, it would have been perfectly intelligible that controversies and questions should arise; that it in turn, should be fiercely disputed as was the belief about the Son, His Eternal Generation and His Oneness with the Father.

But, as a fact, it was not thus propounded as a new departure in the statement of doctrine. It followed when the principle of Personalities, of Acts which are more than Acts, of Results which do not exhaust the Act, had been first set forth at the Council of Nicea. After which it had, through a long-drawn process, been accepted by the hearts of the faithful as essential to the Catholic Faith.

More than this, it follows by necessary inference from belief in the Godhead of Christ, in the Eternal Generation of the Logos.

For, granted that within the Unity of God, there are Two Divine Personalities, subsisting essentially and eternally, and that One is the Reason, the Wisdom, of Him Who from Eternity begat Him; granted that¹ "the Face of the Everlasting Word, if we may dare so to express ourselves, was ever directed towards the face of the Everlasting Father," then surely it follows of necessity that between these Two Divine Persons

¹ Liddon, "Bampton Lectures," No. V.

Eternal Love must pass and repass. A going forth of God from Himself in the Begetting of a Son Who is Divine, implies, and must imply, an Eternal return of God to Himself in a Love which is equally Divine. If His Perfection demands an Eternity of Wisdom, and That a Personal Wisdom, even more must it demand an Eternity of Love. For Love, even more than Wisdom is essential to Divine Perfection. "GOD IS LOVE" (I John IV. 8, 16), we are told by St. John. But we are never told that He is Wisdom, in the same unqualified terms. And this being so, we cannot be surprised that when once His Wisdom was declared by the Church to be revealed in Holy Scripture as a Person Co-eternal with the Father, there was little of difficulty or controversy about acknowledging His Love, in like manner, to be a Person within the Godhead.

And such is exactly the form in which the Divinity of God the Holy Ghost was set forth by the Catholic Fathers of the later fourth and the early fifth centuries—One Eternal Father, Begetting One Eternal Son, in Whom His Wisdom Personally subsists ; One Eternal Son, through Whom there ever proceeds from the Father One Eternal Spirit ; in which eternal spirit there Personally subsists the mutual Love of the Father and of the Son.

By a kind of theological anachronism, there arose, like a birth out of due time, the heresy known as Macedonianism, which disputed this truth, so necessary, so inevitable, as the complement of the Nicene definitions about the Godhead of Christ.

It took its name from one of the Semiarian Archbishops who held the See of Constantinople in the troubled days of the late fourth century. Little was practically needed except to bring it before a Council. Emanating as it did from a tainted source, it commanded little support, and had only to be stated to be condemned. This was effected in A.D. 381, in the Council primarily called to put down the Apollinarian Heresy.

The words which then were added to the Creed set forth at Nicea, expanded the Article about the Holy Ghost to meet the needs of the day. At Nicea nothing was needed except to say "And we believe in the Holy Ghost". From the days of Constantinople onwards, the Article stood as follows : "And we believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and the Life-giver, Who proceedeth from the Father, Who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified, Who spake through the Prophets".¹

¹ By a most unfortunate defect in punctuation, the clause is found in our Prayer Book without a comma after the word Lord. The sense is so obscured by the omission that many less instructed church-people use the formula year after year without understanding that its genuine meaning is that the Holy Spirit is, first, Lord, and then Life-giver. They take it to mean that He is the Lord of Life, and the Giver of it ; whereas LORD (Greek Kurion) stands as a title by itself, ascribing to Him Divine Being, while GIVER-OF-LIFE is a translation of the compound Greek word Zoopoion, meaning Life-giver.

NOTE ON THE "DOUBLE PROCESSION OF THE HOLY GHOST".

In the Athanasian Creed, and in the Western Edition of the Nicene Creed, the Holy Spirit is said to proceed "from the Father and the Son". This is an amplification of the words actually used in the Nicene Creed, as expanded at Constantinople. In the Eastern Church this Creed—which is used both at Baptism and at the Eucharist—is still said exactly as it was issued in A.D. 381 by the Council of Constantinople: "Who proceedeth from the Father"—the Son not being mentioned at all. The addition of the words "and from the Son" was one of the sundering forces which effected the Schism between East and West. But it is THE MANNER OF THE ADDITION OF THE WORDS, rather than any question about their truth, which perpetuates the Schism at this day.

To the statement made in Chapter XIII., above, that the Spirit proceeds from the Father *through* the Son, the Orthodox Church of the East takes no objection. The words "AND the Son" were never intended to express anything else than is expressed by "THROUGH the Son," but they express it less clearly. Moreover, they were inserted into the Creed at a Council held at Toledo in A.D. 589. As the repute of Spain for accurate theology did not stand high in the East at that time, this fact alone was enough to set the Greeks against the clause. As a matter of fact, the reason for insisting on the words was a desire to strengthen belief in the Homooousion on the part of certain Gothic converts, reconciled to the Church on abandoning Arianism.

That the Holy Spirit is the Personal Love of God, and that Love, which pre-supposes Two to love, must be held to proceed mutually from Both, would be admitted by the most uncompromising Eastern theologians. It was feared, not perhaps without reason, that the words "AND the Son" might be

so read as to signify that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Son as an independent Source of His Divinity. What was meant by those who inserted, and by those who now maintain, the words, was that the Son Himself, deriving His Divinity from the Father by Eternal Generation, is the Medium for communicating that same Divine Nature to the Spirit. That which the Son Himself derives by Generation He can only be held to communicate as Medium, not as Originator.

And therefore, when we say at the Eucharist the words "Who proceedeth from the Father AND the Son," the Unity of the Godhead, the Monarchia, the principle that the Father, Himself Unoriginated, is the Origin of all Divinity, is in no way violated or trenched upon.¹

¹ For this last, see Pearson on the Creed, notes on the Article, "And I believe in the Holy Ghost".

CHAPTER XIV.

SAFEGUARDS OF THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY.

TRUTH about God, as revealed to man, must needs be imperfect and fragmentary. It must pass through a refracting medium when it shines on the human understanding. It is clothed in imperfect expressions as set forth in human speech. True as far as it goes, Revelation must ever come short of expressing the whole truth about Him. In condescension to the weakness of His creatures, He reveals Himself, as far as may be, under figures which adumbrate the truth. But Revelation under figures and adumbrations is liable, essentially and as such, to the danger of degenerating into error. A half-truth pressed to its conclusions must issue in total falsehood.

The safeguard lies, as we have seen, in the adoption of companion-terms each true as far as it goes ; each one, by the figure which underlies it, correcting the very mistake which might arise from the correlative term, and each in its turn corrected by the force of that same correlative.

And if such be the case with all truths about God, most especially must it be the case with the most mysterious of all, the Truth of the Trinity in Unity. And this for three reasons—first, because, of all revealed

truths, it is the one which goes farthest and deepest into facts about the Nature of God. It must, for that very reason, transcend our ordinary conceptions as no other truth quite does, and be proportionately liable to distortion.

Second, because it alone among all revealed truths must, in some sense, make its appeal to man in that region of finite thought where our conceptions are simplest and clearest; where the limited truths of reason admit of the least modification; where incompatibilities stand out in the form of the most naked contradiction—the region of numerical quantity.

And, thirdly, because the truth which is its counterpart, the Essential Unity of the Godhead, is the primary tenet of elementary piety, a truth, to trench upon which is to blaspheme His Holy Name, and to expose ourselves to His most just condemnation.

It is true that among the possible reasons why the Truth of the Holy Trinity is revealed may be that, apart from this, the truth of the Unity itself might form a stumbling-block to faith. But still the Unity comes first—first in the order of Revelation, because first in the order of imperious requirement.

For all these reasons then the Doctrine of the Trinity needs guarding, lest it trench on the fact of the Unity. True, it were impossible to the Catholic Church to believe in Three Gods. Nay, it was shown above, in Chapter II., that to instruct, intelligent Christians a belief such as this were inconceivable, must constitute a contradiction in terms.

But absurdity, nay, self-contradiction, form un-

happily no security that an assumption may not be taken up unconsciously, or perhaps even consciously, by unintelligent piety. Still less does it secure to the Church that beliefs which she indignantly repudiates may not be attributed to her.

It is not therefore enough to have shown in general terms, from the Nature and Attributes of God, that, in the Christian sense of the term, Divinity cannot be ascribed to three independent beings, each severally thought of as God. We must go on to elucidate the safeguards which surround belief in the Trinity and prevent its degenerating into Tritheism.

Here, as in every similar case, the safeguards are to be found in the actual terms in which God has made known to us in Scripture the truth about Himself.

It has been found in the course of the ages that men, with their stammering speech, have been compelled by the exigencies of the Church to strike out some terms of their own for defending the deposit of the Faith against the assaults of its enemies. And if these are not to lead in their turn to attacks from some other side, taking rise from the very formulæ thus authorized, we must revert continuously and humbly to the language of Scripture itself. And there, we find that the expressions used are "double one against another"; because, being human words, not even the grace of inspiration can prevent their leading to error if left to stand severally isolated.

The expressions, Person and Personality, struck out by Catholic writers for expressing the Eternal

Relations within the Unity of the Godhead, are specially liable to distortion. Indispensable, no doubt, they are. They saved the situation against Sabellianism. But their suggestions bristle with danger. Taken literally, the Greek *Prosopon*, translated into English by *Person*, comes short of what we want to express ; for it means, in the last resort, nothing more than an aspect or character—literally a mask assumed by an actor as representing some personage in a play ; while to English ears at any rate the associations of *person*, and *personality*, tend to just the opposite error, suggest individual beings partaking of a common nature, but wholly independent of each other in all that marks off each of them as an actual embodiment of that nature.

We must revert then first to the Scriptural terms which set forth the mysterious relations subsisting between Christ and the Father, and next to the names employed of the Holy Spirit.

The Man Whom the Apostles knew as Jesus, the Carpenter of Nazareth, and in Whom they came to believe as the Messiah, fulfilling the Prophecies—what was He, to their ultimate thought, in His relations with God, the Self-existent, revealed to Moses at the bush? He was His Son in some transcendent sense quite different from the sonship by adoption which belongs to favoured men (Rom. i. 3, 4 ; Heb. i. 2, etc.). That is to say, He was regarded as deriving from Him a Being Whose essential Nature is One with that of Jehovah ; a position which, isolated and unbalanced, must lead by inevitable inference to that very belief

in plurality of Gods against which we need to be guarded.

But next He is His *Logos*; that is to say, His Reason, His essential Wisdom, regarded as inherent in His Being, but eternally tending to expression in utterance (St. John i. 1, etc.).

Third, He is "The very Image of His Substance," a Being reproducing in some mystical way the Likeness of Him Whose Image He is, not absolutely identical with Him, nor actually separable from Him; revealing Him because, in His inmost Self, He is one with Him in Nature; while yet He has some affinity for the human understanding, which renders Him capable of embodying to us what had else been removed from our ken (Heb. i. 3).

This last idea is again expressed in the term "The Effulgence of His Glory"—a relation analogous in the realm of the Eternal to that which we discern in Nature between a flame and the light which it gives. As these are inseparable in fact, yet distinct in operative effect, so the Son, as revealed to us, is inseparable from Jehovah the Eternal, yet actively expresses to us the Glory which, apart from His mediation, were "dark with excess of light".

The Eternal Being of the Man Christ Jesus is expressed then, in Scripture, by four distinct terms. He is to the Father Who sent Him, Son, Word or Wisdom, Image, Effulgence.

All of these have one thing in common: they express under various figures the derivation of Being by One from Another, an Existence not

wholly independent of One from Whom it is derived.

But again they fall into two pairs. Two of them express that derivation in figures which, taken by themselves, might be used of finished results from an act taking place once for all, then ceasing, determining, as process or act, and abiding only in result. These two are Son and Image.

A son takes his being from his father, a stamp derives its being from a seal: but, the son once born, the stamp once struck, the being of son or of stamp thus once derivatively conferred, the result alone remains, and is quite independent of the agent or instrument by which the act came about.

The other two terms, on the contrary, express an abiding process, which does not determine and cease when once its purpose is effected; whose result and the act which produce it are not distinct but identical. The reason expressing itself in utterance, or internally maintained without utterance, is itself both act and result. The effulgence which radiates from the flame is an essential part of the combustive process; is the same, and yet not quite the same, with it.

Now combine the force of the several terms into one concurrent impression; remembering that each and all of them refer to an Eternal Mystery, shadowed forth under many figures, lest one should mislead and deceive us. The sum of the whole seems somewhat as follows—an Act which is something more than an Act, which has a definite Result; yet a Result by which the Act is not exhausted; a Result in which the Act

itself is embodied ; a Result which, once effected, does not stand wholly distinct from the Act which brought it about ; which would not be accurately described were it spoken of as existing, when produced, independently of the process of production.

The very terms which set forth the Nature of our Lord in its Eternal Relations with the Father would seem, then, to furnish a safeguard against any violation of the Unity of God through belief in Him as Divine.

And so with the Name of the Holy Spirit. *Pneuma* in Greek and *Spiritus* in Latin mean breathing as well as breath ; mean not only the breath which is drawn but the act by which it is drawn. In other words, they express a Process which, although it has a definite Result, is not worked out in that Result, so that the Process should be effected conclusively, and the Result should survive independently. The Process and the Result may be distinguishable : they are not actually distinct.

This thought was enforced in an earlier chapter, in somewhat different terms, when it was shown that in leading passages, on which we rest our belief in the Spirit as a Personal Being, distinguished from the Father and the Son, He is spoken of alternately as an Agent, Whose work is all His Own, and as a Force at work in humanity through the grace and bounty of God (pp. 190-193, above).

And, similarly, the words just used about the Son, the Logos, the Effulgence, the Image, have only embodied in a varying form what was said in Chapter VIII.

about the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ, as existing before He came hither. It was amply shown in that chapter that while He is unmistakably spoken of as existing in Relations with the Father, and therefore as a different Person, He still is spoken of not seldom in terms which, taken by themselves, would make Him but a function of the Father, with no distinct Personality.

These aspects of the Personal Distinctions within the Unity of the Godhead have found compendious expression in a single Greek word, the *Monarchia*, or Unity of Origin, which they predicate of the Three-in-One. And this forms the first and most important safeguard against our belief in Three Persons contradicting the Unity of the Godhead.

The same idea may be expressed by saying that the Divine Triad expands Itself eternally from a single Centre. For, if the Father alone is "of none," derives His essential Being from no Divine Source, subsists of His Own proper Divinity, while the Son and the Holy Spirit derive their Being from Him, then plainly "we are forbidden by the Catholick Religion: to say, There be three Gods, or three Lords".

And on the other hand, if this Act of Derivation is more than merely a process, if it have an actual Result—which Result does yet not exhaust the Act—then clearly "we are compelled by the Christian verity: to acknowledge every Person by Himself to be God and Lord".

The *Monarchia*, therefore, of the Godhead, the doctrine of expansion from a single Centre, while it

maintains the Trinity within the Unity, is the surest safeguard of all for preventing the Trinity from contradicting the Unity, how uncompromisingly soever we assert it.

Out of just these same considerations, arising from the same set of Titles, there has grown another safeguard, with which great thinkers on the subject have hedged the Unity of the Godhead. The Son and the Holy Spirit are revealed in the Scriptures under Titles which, taken by themselves, would have left us entirely unaware that Personal Being was attributed to them, distinguishable and distinguished from that of the Father. Had we heard of them only under these, we should have thought of them as nothing but functions in the Being and Work of the Father. And this makes an absolute security that belief in the Trinity of the Godhead shall not interfere with belief in the Unity; that no ascription to them of any such personal distinctness can imply that they are separable from the Father in the thought of an orthodox believer. They must exist essentially in the Father, and He essentially in them: Each must be inseparable from Him, and He inseparable from them; so that not One of the Adorable Three can so much as be thought of by us apart from the other Two. And this comes out the more clearly if we remember that throughout the New Testament the Spirit is the Spirit of the Son, and is regarded as sent by the Son, albeit He is sent from the Father. All of which may be looked at again in the light of the paragraphs just above, in which it was pointed out that

the utterance of reason in word, the effulgence of light from fire and the expiration of breath from lungs, three metaphors by which are expressed to us the relations proper to the Trinity, are acts which are not exhausted in producing the result at which they aim. The Titles which express their Personality in terms of an Act or Function, assure us that while calling them Persons we yet think of them as IN the Father. But again, these very Titles, expressing an Act not exhausted in the doing, but having an Eternal Result, assure us that the Father is in them, as they are essentially in Him.

This constitutes a safeguard to the Doctrine of the Trinity which is called in technical theology the mutual Coinherence of the Adorable Persons of the Trinity.

Along with, or resulting from these considerations, another safeguard must be mentioned. While believing in essential Equality of Nature as belonging to all Three Persons, we are forced by the thought of Derivation of Being, and by that of Act or Function, into acknowledging Subordination of Persons as compatible with Unity of Nature.

It is not for nothing that the Persons of the Godhead are spoken of in one set order, wherever exactness of thought is desired. St. Paul may speak, when commending us to God, of "the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the Love of God and the Fellowship of the Holy Ghost" (2 Cor. XIII. 14); because there he has in his mind the approach of sinners to the Father, which can only set out through His Son, and which issues in reception of His Spirit. But when he or any other responsible teacher would set forth in ordered

terms the truth to be believed as of faith, the Father must ever be set forth first, then the Son, and, third, the Holy Spirit. Such must be the order of Revelation and of faith, because such is the Order of Fact—the Father Unoriginate, subsisting in Himself as Jehovah revealed of old, the Son deriving a like Divine Nature immediately from the Father alone, the Spirit deriving a Being, Divine as that of the Father and the Son, which flows to Him from the Father, and that through the medium of the Son.

To sum up then, belief in the Trinity is saved from entrenching on the Unity, first by the general considerations adduced in Chapter III. above, and, second, by careful deductions from the language made use of in Scripture, drawn out by great Teachers of the Church.

It was shown, under the general considerations, that to any instructed Christian it were a sheer contradiction in terms to ascribe Divine Nature or Attributes to any but a Single Being.

Under the head of deductions from Scriptural terms, to save unintelligent piety from falling into doctrinal error, we have dwelt upon three sets of thoughts. These are known to technical Theology as, first, the Monarchia or Unity of Origin which belongs to God in Three Persons; second, the mutual Coinherence which binds the Three into One; and, third, the Subordination of Persons which we hold along with belief in their Equality.

The belief in the Monarchia comes to this. The Triad of Divine Persons unfolds Itself from a single

Centre. The Son derives His Being directly from the Father; while the Spirit derives His Being from the Father, but through the medium of the Son. Thus while we believe in Three Persons, we do not believe in Three Gods. The Nature of All is One and the Same, because Two of the Three to Whom we ascribe it are revealed as possessing it by Derivation from the First.

Second, the mutual Coinherence, in which Each is essentially IN Each, is deduced from certain of the Scriptural terms which convey the thought of Derivation of Nature. These set forth to us the Being of the Son and of the Spirit under the figure of Acts of the Father which are yet not exhausted in the working, and of Results from those same Acts which are indistinguishable, inseparable, in a sense, from the very Acts themselves.

And, third, Subordination, as compatible with Equality, follows necessarily from the thought of Derivation, and combines with that revealed truth to hedge belief in the Unity from being violated by belief in the Trinity.

SUPPLEMENTARY CHAPTER.

SOME PHILOSOPHICAL BEARINGS OF THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY.

1. The necessary relations between Faith and Philosophy ; the same ground often covered by both, though approached with different ends in view ; Faith rather anticipating philosophical conclusions than setting up a Metaphysic of her own.

2. The common-sense presuppositions underlying all Christian Thought ; the personal identity and spiritual nature of man ; soul and body as related to one another ; the reality of matter ; the correspondence of facts in the world around to the impressions formed about them within.

3. The Whence and the Whither of all things ; three possible theories of this confronting one another in deadly antagonism, prior to Revelation as deciding the question—Theism, Materialism, and Pantheism.

4. The Doctrine of the Trinity as succouring Theism when pressed to maintain itself in the face of its opponents.

I.—THE NECESSARY RELATIONS OF FAITH AND PHILOSOPHY.

THUS far the truth of the Trinity in Unity has been presented from a single point of view. We may call this theological or religious, according as we fix our attention on its details or on its general intention.

If we take as our primary consideration its meaning and expression in Scripture and in the Creeds, we shall

say that we are regarding it theologically. If we think of its bearings on devotion and practice, we approach it on the side of Religion.

Under both these special aspects we have examined its positive content, and have guarded it negatively from misapprehensions. We have examined it doctrinally and historically. Have asked how belief in the Trinity of the Godhead is reconcilable, and has been actually reconciled, with the older, elementary belief that "the Lord our God, the Lord is ONE". We have asked on what Scriptural grounds we believe that this Truth about God, as embodied in later Creeds, was held by the earliest Christians; how far it was explicitly revealed by our Lord Jesus Christ Himself; how far it was implicitly held, and then more consciously worked out, under the guidance of God the Holy Ghost, as involved in the faith in His Work which was held by His earliest followers. In the literature and the records of Apostolic times, we have searched for the historical background, against which those passages stand out which most clearly inculcate or imply a belief in distinctions within the Godhead. We have seen how it came to be set forth in authoritative, declaratory form by the collective wisdom of the Church, and what were the attempts, successful or otherwise, which preceded these later declarations, and which called for them as supplements or as correctives.

All this forms the doctrinal, theological side of our treatment of the truth about God which is called the Doctrine of the Trinity.

From a more strictly religious point of view, we

have examined the same belief as it affects us devotionally and practically, as it conduces to devoutness in relation to God, and as it promotes the habit of mind out of which our practical charity flows forth to our fellow-men.

For some, perhaps for most of our readers, this treatment suffices completely : they do not ask anything more, would perhaps even positively prefer that no more should be pressed on their attention. If they have learnt a great Doctrine of the Church—what it is and what it is not, by what means they are assured of its truth, how it bears on their hearts and lives, on the submission of their intellects to God, through His Church, on their obtaining salvation through Christ, on their offering themselves to Him in return, on their securing, through His Mediation, the Gift of the Indwelling Spirit—then what more, they are inclined to ask, need any one have or desire in connexion with any truth ?

They have known no obstinate questionings about the ultimate relations of things, have felt no imperious cravings for final intellectual satisfaction as to how their beliefs about God, and about His relations to the world, fit in with the results of philosophical thought. In a word, the metaphysical aspects of belief are to them a name and no more.

The supplementary chapter which has to follow is not written for believers such as these. Indeed, it has been placed where it stands as a supplement to all that goes before, and not as an integral part of the general treatment of the subject, in order that nothing may

interpose to interrupt the train of theological thought along which alone they instinctively move.

But for others our treatment of the Doctrine would appear to be incomplete, were it not followed out a little way along wholly different lines.

To them it is a necessary function of a true theological system to provide some account of the Universe of things from the religious point of view ; of the relations of all created things to God, to man, and to each other. And it is not only admissible, it is right, that they should make this demand upon Theology, should require that it be ready to vindicate its position in the face of adverse speculations, that it be not open to attack upon an undefended flank by any system of hostile Philosophy.

For it cannot retain the allegiance of the heart, unless it can, up to a certain point, provide satisfaction to the speculative reason. For "in the long run the world is ruled by logic," and nothing can be tenable in Religion which is demonstrably false in Philosophy or Science.

There is, then, a whole field of intellectual speculation, over which theologian and philosopher are equally bound to range. They approach this, it is true, with different motives, and their treatment of its problems must differ accordingly. A purely intellectual satisfaction, a logical account of all things that are, may suffice for the needs of the philosopher ; because, within the purview of ontology, the spiritual needs of mankind do not occupy a primary position. So long as the understanding is satisfied, no other question need be asked from the purely metaphysical point of view.

To theologians the very same problems present themselves in a different light. To them the satisfaction of spiritual need is the first, the most important consideration. A system of Philosophy which fails of this they will hold to be self-condemned, how complete soever be its speculative answer to all the problems which perplex mankind. For Philosophy and Theology have different motives, though the questions which interest their students must often run parallel with each other. Knowledge, for the sake of knowledge alone, completeness of logical method and results, disinterested strivings after barren consistency in its view of all things that are, form the only motives recognized by Metaphysics.

To Theology, worship is the ultimate goal. To know as much about God and His world as will bring the spirit of man into personal intercourse with Him must be that which theologians set before them as the motive of all true thinking.

And this divergence of ultimate motive must produce a corresponding difference in the handling of speculative problems by theologians and ontologists respectively. A thinker whose motives are speculative alone will follow a metaphysical lead to its utmost logical conclusions, and never so much as make room for the thought that a logical conclusion in speculative regions may even lie open to doubt as regards its own proper completeness, if it wholly starve the spirit of man. While one whose primary object is to satisfy the needs of the spirit will hold that his speculative system must indeed be consistent as far as it goes, that it must not

go contrary to logical instinct in matters where logic is able to judge : yet he will hold that the needs of our spiritual nature reach out to a region of Being beyond the reach of the speculative reason. He will maintain that, to crib and confine them within the limits of philosophical completeness, is to starve, to stunt, to ignore the most important part of himself, his soul, with its demands for spiritual nutriment. And all this, he will say, is being done in the interests of his speculative reason ; which, after all, is not the self of himself, as his moral being is.

He must admit that his metaphysical system, while complete as far as it goes, leaves some questions unanswered, unattempted. But this, he will maintain, is the necessary result of his embracing within his religious outlook some questions which reason, with its spiritual barrenness, ignores or sets aside altogether.

Speculative incompleteness, he will argue, has a right to pass uncondemned when it stands at the bar of the whole man ; because the tribunal includes in its purview a region of spiritual things, within whose mysterious precincts unaided reason has no jurisdiction.

While spiritual barrenness, he will equally maintain, is out of court to begin with ; except on the supposition, untenable by him, that the region of sacred things, within which his spirit habitually moves, is a figment of pious imaginations, with no corresponding reality.

What, then, will be the position of the man of spiritual mind, who claims, in the words of St. Paul, to "receive the things of the Spirit of God" (1 Cor. II,

14), when he finds himself confronted by systems of thought which claim to answer with absolute completeness all questions concerning the Universe and man?

Must he, must the Church whose doctrine he receives, be content with a negative, critical attitude towards philosophical questions? Are we to ask nothing more of Philosophy, with its hoary associations of venerable wisdom, than to leave our beliefs alone and not to perturb us with obstinate questionings? Or, if this position be clearly impossible, lest we lost the allegiance of thinking men, then, next, is the Church to construct for herself an all-embracing Philosophy? Is she to claim to satisfy the needs of the understanding as she claims to satisfy those of the spirit? There have been times in her history when such claims have been made on her behalf. The Christian Platonists of Alexandria, in the second and third century, and still more the Schoolmen, at a later date, did claim to answer all speculative questions in terms of the Christian Faith.

But in neither case has the armour of Saul been found to fit the champion of God. The spiritual treasures committed to the Church are but rashly exposed to the risks of battle if the Ark of God be carried into the camp, and greeted with shoutings till the earth ring again. She dare not risk her dearest possessions on the changes and chances of speculative disputes. She must be able to choose her own position before she offers battle with everything staked upon the issue. Her wisest policy has ever been this—not to offer to solve all possible questions when stated in terms which are not her own, and which may be propounded in a

hostile spirit ; but to guide the understanding of her children to anticipate these before they arise ; to formulate her own beliefs about God, and about His relations to His world, in terms which shall cut away the ground from under the feet of opposing systems. And such, as we shall find in the sequel, is not the least considerable service which her statement of the Doctrine of the Trinity in Unity has rendered to the faith of her children.

How preferable such a course must be to the attempt to exhaust the problems of existence by stating them all in a form of her own, it is not difficult to see.

The needs of sinful men for intercourse with redeeming Love are the same in every age. Yet even the theological expression of these must vary from generation to generation. Much more must not only philosophical expressions, but the accepted conclusions of philosophy itself, present themselves in different lights to different ages and countries. For the Church to be committed to these variations were a wholly intolerable risk.

By her faith in the Incarnation of the Son, and in the Triune Being of God, she has anticipated every question that is raised by Materialism and by Pantheism, the two great monistic systems of Philosophy which divide the realm of non-Christian thought ; Materialism, which denies the existence of spirit, and Pantheism, which denies the Personality of God ; each of them, again, in its respective form, denying all true personality to man. And on the strength of this anticipatory treatment the Christian can meet their challenge. We dare

not, it is true, maintain for the Gospel, as the votaries of each of these systems maintain for their own beliefs, that it can solve all problems of existence with an absolute logical completeness. For the very existence of faith—of THE FAITH—implies that there are regions of thought within which these have no place. We can but offer a mystical solution, while denying that any other is possible. We must maintain that the logical consistency which is claimed for Materialism and Pantheism is gained by ignoring one half of the problems which they loudly profess to have solved. We must enforce this by stoutly maintaining that even intellectual consistency, complete as far as it goes, must lie open to the gravest suspicion, on its own merely rational ground, if it be proved to have satisfied one side of our nature at the cost of starving another. We must urge that any speculative system which leaves the spirit completely unsatisfied, is proved by that very fact to be far more incomplete, as an account of all things that are, than one which, providing for the soul and the conscience, admits that it regards some problems of existence as waiting for final solution till we pass within the veil.

Setting out with premises such as these, the Church will deal with speculative questions in such a way, and up to just such a point, as is needed for her own proper ends, for justifying the spiritual guidance which she holds to be the one thing needful.

On Materialism she makes war without compromise, as contradicting the primary principles on which her whole system is built. Towards Pantheism, her attitude is different. That system in some sense re-

cognizes God. The difference between its conception of Him and that which the Church believes, is to be found in the question of His Immanence in His creatures. Of this we shall have much to say later on. Suffice it to indicate here that the Church does believe that He is immanent in all things, and that all things are immanent in Him ; but in a sense which leaves room for His Transcendence as well : while Pantheism maintains that mutual immanence, in a sense which leaves no room for Transcendence, nay, a sense which, in the last resort, denies any difference between God and Creation ; which merges all things in Him till they lose independent existence altogether.

The Church maintains that the element of truth which underlies these false conclusions concerning Transcendence and Immanence, is assumed, by anticipation, in her own beliefs about God and His Creation.

Transcendence and Immanence she claims to combine, as both, in their several ways, forming part of her Catholic Belief. To Pantheists on one side, and mere Theists on the other, they may present themselves as sheer contradictories. To her, with her faith in the Incarnation and the Trinity, they are two complementary truths of fact ; each of which, when stated alone, forms only a part of the whole ; each of which may, no doubt, be so stated as apparently to rule out the other ; each of which, when approached in the light of her Faith, is essential to a balanced hold upon Truth.

But even this reconciliation she effects, be it fully laid down, not so much by positive enunciation, after

the questions have been stated by others, but rather by anticipation; by stating her belief in the Incarnation, and by passing from this to its necessary consequence, the Distinction of Persons within the Godhead; that is to say, to the Doctrine—or, shall we say? to the Fact—of the Eternal Three in One.

It is not, then, Christianity but Deism, not the Faith of the Three in One, but belief in a solitary God, with no distinction of Persons, which has to tremble before the formidable antinomy propounded by Immanence and Transcendence, and to impale itself on one of the horns which their terrible dilemma thrusts forth.

II.—THE PRESUPPOSITIONS OF CHRISTIAN THOUGHT.

But before we can approach the doctrine of the Trinity as illuminative and helpful on subjects like these, we must indicate in some brief outline the necessary preconceptions or assumptions from which Christian thought sets out. We must ask, with what do we start when we approach from a Christian point of view the problems which have exercised mankind ever since speculation began?

For Christian thought on such subjects does not start with a *tabula rasa* before it. Every scheme of systematic thought sets out with certain assumptions underlying its treatment of things; and each step in its subsequent progress is affected by, nay, wholly depends on, these few elementary assumptions. They are what we might call categories of thought. That is

to say, they are hardly so much thought-out conclusions, about which we might possibly think otherwise than we do : they are rather our necessary point of departure, from which to think other things out. It is true that when we set ourselves to think of them, they approve themselves to our deliberate judgment, as we test them in the light of their results. But while we cannot give them up on fuller consideration, we feel that, at any rate to start with, they were not results of conscious thought, but rather conditions of our thinking at all ; that apart from them thought seems impossible, or else its results seem hopelessly ridiculous, mere logic-chopping, sophistical devices, contradicting our instinctive good sense.

What, then, is the first elementary, common-sense assumption underlying the Christian Scheme of things? It is that of an immaterial, indivisible something which accounts for the very existence of thinker and thought alike. This we call our human personality. If we are asked to prove its existence, we reply that our interrogator, by asking the question, has assumed what he asks us to prove, exactly as we assume it ourselves when we put it into words and assert it. For in virtue of what does he doubt of personality, if it be not by exercising the very personality whose existence he asks to be convinced of? When he uses the words, "I doubt," or, "I question," he assumes as the basis of his question or his doubt that he, the questioner, exists and thinks. And to us who approach such subjects from a Christian point of view, this assumption of personal existence lifts the subject

to a plane of thought in which a thinker's existing and thinking carries with it the absolute conviction that he is not a material being alone, but that he is before all things a spiritual being.

To put this in a slightly different form, the material part of our existence, our body, with all its marvellous powers, is not to a Christian thinker the primary fact of our existence as men. On the contrary, we start on our inquiries about things by assuming that our physical structure is known to us primarily and chiefly as the organ, or outward expression, of another, a higher, part of us, which we speak of as ourselves, our personality, our spirit.

The assumption, as we shall find hereafter, has to justify itself in the face of deep questionings by no means free from complications and difficulties. We are challenged by a school of thinkers whom we call materialistic philosophers, to show that this assumption of ours has not been upset by the detailed knowledge which has come to us in recent times about the facts of vegetable and animal life ; especially facts about the close similarity which exists between man and the animal creation.

They even go so far as to tell us that "the brain secretes thought as the liver secretes bile"; which assertion they try to support by the fact that thought, or something closely akin to it, is to be found in other creatures, to which we do not attribute personality in the sense assumed above. To all which we find ourselves constrained to reply that to us it is simply a juggling with words to speak of thought and bile (in

other words, of consciousness and matter) as being commensurable facts ; that if any maintains that they can be treated as such, he is making a much more arbitrary assumption than is made by us Christian thinkers when we treat the existence of thought as proving without more ado the existence of a spiritual being who thinks. The Christian assumption, we boldly maintain, is a primary condition of thinking at all ; while the other—the assumption that thought and bile are not things differing in kind—does violence to primary *data* of consciousness.

We do assume and maintain a connexion, a most intimate relation, between the spirit, the part of us that thinks, and the brain, the material instrument through which the thinking is carried on. We admit that changes in the matter of the brain are conditions, apart from which we have no experience of thinking. But tell us that thinking begins and ends with these changes in the structure of the brain, and we reply that this is but a jargon of words ; that it is rather a contradiction of thought than anything which we can acknowledge as a rational result of thinking—in fact that it conveys to us no meaning at all which a reasonable being can accept.

But if the first assumption of all is that of the existence of a spiritual personality—a self, an *ego*, an immaterial being, which continuously thinks and feels—the next is that of the bodily frame in which, by means of which, our spirit realizes its own possibilities ; apart from which indeed we have no experience of spiritual existence.

It will be plain, as our reasoning proceeds, that we have every reason to believe that a Higher Spiritual Being exists altogether independently of matter. But of this we have no direct experience. That conscious, spiritual existence which underlies our whole experience, and apart from which the thought of experience is mere contradiction and absurdity, has always been known to each one of us in connexion with, and depending upon, a material instrument, our body.

This bodily part of ourselves is known to us as really, as directly, as the conscious spiritual being itself. The pain of an aching limb, the satisfaction of hunger or thirst, are known to us as really and as directly as our own personality is known. Try to reason us out of the belief that it exists, and that we know this directly as a fact of our experience, and again we reply, as before, that the words have for us no meaning, that to deny this is to put oneself out of court, in fact that its denier denies that he denies!

We set out, then, as Christian thinkers, with two assumptions only, both founded on direct experiences or cognitions—first, that of our own personality as a primary spiritual fact; next, that of our bodily frame, a corresponding material fact, this also known directly to us as the instrument through which our personality acts. With these two primary *data* we start to investigate all things.

Next, we need not stir beyond our own bodies to discover that material things have another relation to ourselves besides that direct cognition with which we set out on our experience. The hand which we know

directly as capable of pain or of ease, and as responding to the orders of our will when we bid it move or keep still, can be known to us, again, in a different fashion : we can subject it to the inquiries of other senses besides that sense of feeling by which we are directly aware of it. We can study it through our eyes, so as to learn what manner of instrument that is which carries out our purposes so deftly. Or, if we strike our two hands together, their impact is known to us directly, as before, by the feeling flashed back to us by each ; but, again, it is known in another way, by the sensation of noise which appeals to our hearing. And, again, the hand can feel the eye ; so that the eye's direct appeal to ourselves, its assertion of its own existence by its conveying the sensation of sight, is confirmed and supplemented by the testimony of the hand—there is something which the hand can feel at the place where we are conscious that light flashes on us : we know the eye in an indirect fashion, by the hand being cognisant of its shape ; besides our knowledge, so totally direct, that it gives us the sensation of sight.

By these means a second great fact gets established—that each material thing within our own bodily frame can appeal to us in more than one way, indirectly as well as directly ; not only through the sense of which it is the instrument, through and by which we are directly aware of it, but also through some other sense or senses which communicate facts to us about it in a second, a less direct way.

This stage in our knowledge is highly important : it is on it that there depends our absolute certainty

that our senses do not deceive us when they lead us, at the stage which comes next, to believe in the existence of things-not-ourselves which create impressions on our senses. Its ampler treatment will be found in the note appended to the present chapter. To treat it fully in the text would occupy too much space.

We may, then, pass at once to the next marked stage in the exploring of things which we all go through unconsciously as children.

We have learnt that we have bodily organs, have learnt this directly and indirectly ; directly, by the fact that we use them for one sense ; indirectly, by the fact that we observe them with another sense.

From this we pass to the further knowledge that, outside our personal organism, there exist certain other material things which leave impressions on our senses.

Now this knowledge that there is something outside us, and that the impression on our senses is due to its existence, is not in itself less direct than our secondary knowledge of the hand, by seeing it, or our secondary knowledge of the eye, by feeling it. But in this case it is matter of pure assumption that there is anything there to produce the impression. All that we know directly is the fact that a certain impression is produced on our organs of sensation. That there is anything there to produce it is not direct knowledge at all : it is only an inference from the fact of the sensation. But, between our knowledge of the hand by seeing it, and our knowledge of a rose by smelling it, there is this important difference, that the knowledge of the hand by seeing it is only a re-assertion of earlier, more direct,

knowledge, the knowledge of the hand which came to us by using it, or from feeling its comfort, or the opposite ; while the knowledge of the rose which we have by smelling it has no such previous experience to which to appeal for confirmation. The smelling there can be no doubt of : we are as sure of it as we are of our existence. But the presence of the rose corresponding to the smell—well, that may be a necessary assumption to account for the smell apprehended by one sense, and the form apprehended by another, and the resistance encountered by a third ; but an inference it is and must remain, as distinguished from immediate knowledge such as that which we have of the eye when it distinguishes light from darkness.

Now what is it that raises this mere assumption to that character of absolute certainty which we all agree to allow to it ? It is the fact that exactly similar knowledge acquired about the hand by seeing it, or about the eye by feeling it, proved verifiable to the point of full certainty, was raised from assumption to fact, by corresponding to earlier knowledge ; which earlier, more direct, knowledge forms a very part of our mental equipment, a condition of all our thinking.

But if the assumption and inference proved absolutely right in the case where we could verify them by knowledge more direct, then why should we doubt that they are equally correct in the cases where we cannot so compare them ? The senses spoke no less plainly in one case than in the other : the assumption or inference was no less inevitable. Then why, we may ask, should it be less certain ?

III.—THE WHENCE AND THE WHITHER OF ALL THINGS ; THEISM, MATERIALISM AND PANTHEISM AS RIVAL THEORIES OF THE UNIVERSE AND ITS ORIGIN.

We all of us set out, then, at first, with but two initial categories or *data*, which we did not need to acquire, which we *lived* before we knew them, which we knew without reasoning about them—indeed, without knowing that we knew them. The first is our immaterial self, our spirit, the being that we *are* ; in which, as knowledge develops, we learn to hope that we shall still exist when our body has passed into dust. The second is the body, the material frame through which our spirit expresses itself, from which it receives impressions, on which, and through which, it acts. These alone, in themselves, and as related to each other, are matter of direct, irrefragable experience. All else, how certainly soever we know it, is derived by inference from these experiences. But from these we pass on by inevitable inference to the knowledge that, without us, but related to ourselves, there is a world of other spirits and a world of other matter.

Now, whenever and wherever these things have been pondered by men of inquiring minds, the question has presented itself unsought—what accounts for these human experiences? Whence come they? How far are they really irrefragable? What proof have we got that they are not misleading?

From these we may try to escape if we will. Indeed, reasons for refusing to entertain or discuss them are far from difficult to find. It is open to say

that for sensible men the questions themselves are absurd ; that we cannot stand clear of ourselves and inspect our own inmost constitution ; that it were hardly less absurd to try to jump away from the shadow of our body than to try to get far enough away from our minds to grow familiar with the sight of their working. For, indeed, we assume from the first—be we Christians, Materialists or Pantheists—we practically assume what we want to investigate, in the act of setting forth to find out if it is there.

But the questionings go on in spite of us. If we decline to regard them as needful to ourselves, we find that in succour of our neighbours we are obliged to treat them as serious.

Assuming accordingly that they have to be met, we find ourselves confronted, the moment we face them, with three great systems of thought, each moving on lines of its own which never run parallel for a moment ; which are drawn, in fact, in such different planes, that while each system of the three is in deadly conflict with the other two, yet each is for ever beating the air in a vain attempt to send home its blows to opponents out of its reach.

These three antagonistic conceptions of things are the Theistic, the Atheistic and the Pantheistic. The Theistic may also be called the Religious, the Atheistic is better known at this day by the name of Materialistic, the Pantheistic has no other popular title, but it might be designated the Pseudo-Spiritual.

Theists attribute the origin of all things to the Will of a Supreme Spirit, Whom they hold to be in

some sense a Personal Being ; that is to say, they attribute to God, but in an infinitely higher degree, the will, the understanding, the power, the affections which we know by experience to be present in ourselves. To the exercise of His Power, His Wisdom, and His Love, they attribute the origin and the sustenance of all things. This conception, in the form which is now to be considered, is to some extent independent of Revelation. With the revealed, and more especially with the Christian, conception of God and His relations with all things, we shall deal at full length later on. It is as coming to the succour of hard-pressed Theism, when encountering difficulties inherent in thought, and raised in their acutest forms by the systems of Atheism and Pantheism, that the Doctrine of the Trinity in Unity displays its bearing on philosophical thought. For the present, the only Theism in question is that which many thoughtful men believe that they establish for themselves by observing the Universe and all that it contains. It has so much in common with the Gospel of Christ that it believes in One Supreme Spirit, "Maker of Heaven and earth and of all things, visible and invisible," Creator of finite spirits as well as material things.

To the whole Theistic conception of things Materialism is consistently and sharply opposed. Setting out, as we have seen that it does, by denying spiritual personality to man, it is but consistent with itself in refusing to believe in a Supreme Spirit. If it can wholly set aside the testimony of consciousness to our being ourselves immaterial creatures, incarnate in

bodily forms, it cannot acknowledge that the Universe around requires for its complete explanation a Supreme, unembodied Spirit to bring it into being at first, or to sustain it now that it exists.

A system like this presents no one point at which Christians, or other Theists, can approach it with terms of peace or of truce. It must be war right along the line.

Pantheism has so much in common with Theism that it starts from the acknowledgment of spirit as the primary *datum* and assumption of its system. But it has so much in common with Materialism that it too denies to man any real and intelligible personal being. Personality, alike as the foundation of experience, and as the starting-point of philosophical thought, assumes the existence of innumerable spirits, each personal, and each individual; each, so far independent of all the rest, that it moves and acts in a sphere of its own.¹

Now Pantheism takes as its point of departure the exact contradictory of this. It acknowledges the existence of only One Being, the Universal, the Indivisible, the Infinite Spirit, Whom—or Which—it habitually speaks of under the terms, the Infinite, the Absolute. It regards all finite personalities—or what, for the sake of conventional clearness, we must continue to speak of

¹ This sphere, in the case of finite spirits, whatever may be the case with the Infinite Spirit, is barred by the fact of personality itself against penetration by any one else. It is only the Spirit of God Himself Who can enter and take actual possession of our personal spiritual being. And even He so passes within us as to leave our individuality intact. We are pervaded, not absorbed, by His Presence.

as finite personalities—as modes or illusory manifestations of the One all-pervading, all-embracing Spirit. This Spirit it holds to be related to the Universe in much the same way as our spirit is related to our bodily frame. All Nature, nay all things that exist at all, whether spiritual or, so-called, material, it regards as only the outward form through which this One Impersonal Spirit expresses and realizes Itself.

To one of these three systems each person who thinks on the subject at all must, with greater or less consistency, find himself committed. Some, doubtless, think to a certain point without troubling themselves to carry their thoughts to their legitimate, logical conclusions. But think consistently enough, and proceed to a logical conclusion, and you end by being a Theist, an Atheist, or a Pantheist.

Now, apart, for the moment, from belief in Revelation, with all the moral considerations brought to bear by such belief, which system of the three—for they are mutually exclusive—has most to be said for it on rational grounds?

The question must be argued at considerable length. But—to anticipate for a moment the reasoned conclusion—Theism confessedly transcends experience, Materialism flatly contradicts it, Pantheism ignores it altogether.

Theism, we admit, transcends experience when it tells us that matter and everything that we know owes its being to the Will of an Omnipotent Spirit. We have no experience save of finite spirits, and can only argue from these to the Existence of an Infinite Spirit. We have no experience of creation out of nothing, but

only of new combinations and arrangements evolved from material already existing.

We must, therefore, admit, from the first, that belief in Creation by an Infinite Spirit is, apart from actual Revelation, an inference from experience on a lower plane, and therefore can never attain to certainty, but only to a measure of reasoned probability—a measure whose convincingness for each individual is not continuous with the limited purview of logical, reasoned-out thought.

But then, first, it does not contradict experience, as we claim that Materialism does. Nor, again, does it set it aside altogether, as we shall show that Pantheism does. It sets out with the unreasoned assumptions of thought which have been fully expounded above, and to these it is faithful throughout. All inferences which go beyond these it can claim to have made by legitimate processes, consistent as far as they go, though confessedly imperfect in themselves, and therefore incapable of establishing a certainty.

But, third, it boldly lays down for itself that this disclaimer of logical completeness is not a weak point in its system of thought, but is one of the secrets of its strength. To deny the existence of spirit, to maintain that matter is all that exists is, in Materialism, the height of presumptuous arrogance. To affirm the existence of an Absolute Spirit, denying the reality of finite things, is, in Pantheism, the height of unreasoning dogmatism. To maintain the reality of the finite, directly known as the foundation of experience, and from that to infer the existence of the Infinite—to maintain

that the reality of the finite necessitates, as an escape from sheer contradiction, the equally real existence of the Infinite—these are, in Theism, but a modest affirmation that we base our thinking on original *data* which all of us practically knew before we were capable of knowing that we knew them. And on this, if there were nothing more to be said, a Theist could boast himself a reasonable being, as compared with believers in the systems which deride him.

He holds that the ultimate problems of thought, running up as they do into the realm of the Infinite, are beyond being fully grasped by any intelligence not itself Infinite. To declare himself incapable of fully apprehending them he regards as a necessary precedent condition of rational thought on the subject. He accordingly limits his ambitions and his claims to arriving at conclusions which shall not be unreasonable, and to holding them with a high degree of probability. His belief in a Supreme and Personal Spirit he believes that he can show to be at least less unreasonable than either of the two conflicting theories which dispute the ground with his own.

And, lastly, though we do not, at the present stage, fall back on the authority claimed for Revelation, a Theist can further maintain that his system has this to be said in its favour, that it satisfies the moral needs of man, that it allows for all the terrible experiences which are known as the horror and despair of remorse, and for all those joys, the purest on earth, which have come from belief in communion with God. Whether, therefore, his system can be fully proved, or whether

it has only a prevailing probability, at least it leads to moral satisfactions which prove it conformable to humanity at its best.

For further elucidation of the case for Theism, it is best to fall back on the comparative method—to draw out the strength and the weakness of the systems with which it competes, and to show that a detailed comparison with these only proves that Theism has nothing to lose when compared with Materialism and Pantheism.

To proceed then, the Atheistic theory of the Universe sets out by denying the existence of spirit; it claims to exhibit the consciousness of man as only forming the final stage in an age-long series of physical combinations which are, and which account for, everything that exists. Whereas we set out on our conscious life by experiences and acts which we vainly supposed to be those of a spiritual being, inhabiting and using a material frame, we are asked to believe that the material frame is the beginning and end of all that we are. It can be proved that each of our sensations and volitions, of our movements of affection, of fear and of appetite, correspond to changes and modifications which pass in the matter of nerves and brain. And from this Materialism argues that all that we speak of as our spiritual being is explained by, nay consists of, these physical changes. Behind the eyes which see, using the brain which thinks and wills, exercising the affections which desire and obtain, there lies no immaterial soul, the subject of sensation, of thought or of love. Pervading all the successive acts

which make life, by their sequence, a continuous whole, there is no self-identical spiritual personality : succession is all, identity is nought. It was said by an old Greek thinker, that life was like a stream flowing past us, in which each individual act is so complete, and so detached, that "we can never step twice into the same water". One who thought to reply by a *reductio ad absurdum* said—"No, nor yet once". What he said as an absurd and impossible paradox, is adopted by every Materialist as a grave and substantial basis for thought. For Materialism acknowledges only the stream, and denies that there is any to step into it. Materialism contends that in human experience there is nothing which cannot be explained without assuming the existence of spirit : consciousness, in all its manifestations, can be reduced to a "mode of motion," something differing in degree, but not in kind, from other phases of material development.

And if we reply, as a Theist must do, that organic change in the structure of the brain and conscious activity of thought and will are facts which move in different planes, and cannot be reduced to common terms, a rejoinder is found by referring us back to facts that obtain in the ant or the dog. The organized activity of a colony of ants, the intelligence and faithful affection of a dog, we accept, they say, without postulating spirit to account for their interest and beauty. These, again, are removed but a step from lower activities similar in kind ; till we get down to the mere irritability of tissue which distinguishes the lowest animal life from facts in which consciousness

plays no part. Pass from this to life in the vegetable world, where roots travel far in the search for water. Pass, again, from the lowest vegetable life, to the metal which is wearied and recuperates itself ; and again, to the crystal, whose material is polarized by an invariable sequence of organization. We find, it is said, an unbroken succession, with links too subtle, almost, to be distinguished at point after point ; and these links connect, by imperceptible gradations, the quartz which lies on the mountain side with the brain of Galileo or Alexander the Great. If Newton, we are told, was a spiritual being, because he could reason from the fall of the apple to gravitation as regulating suns and systems, then, so must the apple which fell, and so must the earth which attracted it to fall, be held by parity of reasoning to be other than mere material beings.

The next step follows as a matter of course. If the existence of finite human spirits is nothing but a popular fallacy, the case for the Existence of an Infinite Spirit has nothing to give it a claim to attention : it is only an inference, unwarrantably drawn, from premises assumed without foundation.

The case, as thus set forth, has, at first sight, much that is plausible about it. Its strength is to be found in the regular sequence underlying the phenomena of Nature in its various stages of ordered development.

Its weakness lies in the account that it gives of human intelligence and consciousness. It denies all personal unity to consciousness ; it reduces life to a series of sensations, with no continuous thread of per-

sonality to account for their constituting a unified whole. This denial is essential to its very existence as a system of consistent reasoning : admit that there is any continuous identity in the life of a human being, and the bubble is pricked once for all.

But to deny to consciousness this continuous unity, is to deny that there is anything to reason about. Our only knowledge of matter is connected with a unified, ordered experience, based on personality as a living fact. Tell us, as Materialists delight to do, that we have no direct cognition of mind, and the reply comes plain and obvious at once—that we have no direct cognition of anything else but mind, except it be of the organized matter of which our bodies are composed ; and that the body, again, is the agent of the mind, only known, and only able to be known, in direct connexion with mind : while our knowledge of matter outside our bodies is certainly not direct ; it is an inference, and a second-hand inference at that, from our only direct and immediate knowledge, the knowledge that we are spirits with bodies.

Yet it is only on the strength of this secondary knowledge—of this inference that matter exists, and that it has regular sequences—that we are asked to set aside the only thing which we, or which any man that ever lived, has known or can know immediately and directly, our knowledge of spirit as distinguished from matter. For Materialism tells us that our inferences about matter have not been drawn by a spiritual being with continuous personal identity, but by a something which was called by John Stuart Mill, a “permanent

possibility of sensation " ; which is to say that, there is really no one to infer, but only a succession of impressions, made somehow, on something inferentially known as the brain of a human being. What permanence means, apart from personality with continuous unity of experience—what sensation means with no person to experience it—what we know or can know of matter, except as affecting a personal being—of these things Materialism gives no account.

Theists, then, have a right to say that if the assumption of a Personal Creator goes admittedly beyond our human experience, at any rate they do not set out on their quest by flatly contradicting and stultifying experience ; that if their system is not complete, at any rate it *is* a system ; that it does not deny, at the very first start, all that makes it worth while to have a system at all.

Materialism ends, then, in absolute failure. Starting by denying to human thought that intuitive knowledge of ourselves as spirits with which the Theist sets out, it fails to grapple with ultimate problems, denies that they can be grappled with at all.

How fares it with Pantheism in a similar attempt ? Absolutely opposed as it is to Materialism, has it anything helpful of its own to offer ? We have seen that it has this in common with Theism, that it, too, postulates spirit as the primary, intuitive *datum* of thought ; while it differs from Theism in another respect—that it denies reality to finite spirits, as distinguished from the One All-embracing Infinite Whose Existence it treats as intuitively known. " Spirit," in the mouth of Pan-

theistic thinkers, connotes but One Self-existent Being, in the face of Whose Infinite, Absolute Existence, the finite, the contingent, shrivels into nothingness.

Acknowledge the existence of Spirit at all—so argues every Pantheistic philosopher—and you cannot stop short of attributing all things to the will of One Self-existent Spirit, which we designate by the Titles of the Infinite, the Absolute. This granted, the next step follows of itself. The Infinite is That which is without limitation; limit the Infinite in your thought by anything, in any direction, and at once you are landed in total contradiction: your Infinite is shown to be limited, to be finite. Not to include within itself all being, material or spiritual, means not itself to be other than finite. Therefore everything that exists is included in the Infinite, is a mere manifestation or mode of the One, All-inclusive, Absolute Spirit.

For an Infinite, inclusive of all that exists, must be Absolute as surely as Infinite. The One can have no relations with anything—for, indeed, there is nothing beyond Itself, with which such relations were actual or possible.

Therefore Theism, treating of an Infinite God, with Whom finite creatures can enter on relations, is held by all Pantheistic thinkers to set out with contradicting its own first premises. It lays down, it is true, the Infinity of God; but it goes on, they say, in the very same breath, to limit—that is, to contradict—His Infinity; for it says that finite creatures exist without being included in Him. And, next, it ascribes Personality to its Infinite, thus involving itself in further contradic-

tions, from which it is claimed that Pantheism is free : for personality, they say, is in itself a limitation, involving a distinction between self and not-self ; whereas, if the Infinite be, all-inclusive, there is no non-self from which to distinguish it. Let the Infinite be true though all else be delusion—so argues the Pantheist in every age and in every race of mankind.

Pantheism in every possible shape, European as well as Oriental, entails all this on the logical side. For Absolute Existence, on its own demonstration, is one and the same with Absolute Nothingness ; including in itself all possible attributes, it issues at last in colourless neutrality ; the mutual contradictions of polar opposites crossing off one another till zero is reached. To be Infinite means so to include in Itself all opposites and all contradictions, that only a bare existence remains, indistinguishable from nothingness in any respect.

The Pantheism of the East goes farther than this. It carries its passion for logical completeness to the point of admitting on the moral side this same reduction of all things that are to a point of indifference and neutrality. Its Infinite, its God, its One-without-a-second, it admits to be a monster of wickedness as well as an ideal of Infinite Goodness. And so It is set forth to Its worshippers in India, embodied in the frantic fury of Khali and the equally frantic lustfulness of Krishna ; and It is honoured in both of these hideous embodiments by strictly conformable actions.

Now, how loathsome soever such Pantheism may be when followed to its moral conclusions, it is plain

that if once its postulates are granted, its logical conclusions follow of course.

If an Infinite and Absolute Spirit exist, and if logic can deal with Him in the same untrammelled, argumentative way as with other objects of thought, He must be the All-in-all, the One-without-a-second, the Absolute Existence, within Whose Infinity contradictions and opposites meet, and mutually neutralize each other. Its pure Existence, from its very purity, resolves Itself into pure Naught.

What help—or at least what direct help—can accrue to Christian thought from such a system as this? Like the friendly Jin in the “Arabian Nights,” it consumes itself to ashes and naught in the act of destroying the demon of Atheism against which its aid was invoked.

But, then, the question must needs be asked, Does Pantheism prevail against Theism as well? Having nothing to offer on the positive side, does it yet destroy the Theistic hypothesis, whose logic it treats with such total contempt?

The answer goes back to the assumptions of thought, with which we have seen that Theism sets out. All knowledge of spirit, whether Infinite or finite, is based on the original, intuitive knowledge that we ourselves are spiritual beings. Apart from this as a starting-point for thought, our belief in the very existence of spirit must hang suspended in vacancy. If we do not know that we are spirits ourselves, independent centres of personal energy, the belief that there is such a thing as spirit has no foundation in reason. If we

do not know this, there is nothing to know, nor any person to know it : we and our knowledge, or our absence of knowledge, our powers, our limitations, our sense and our delusions, are alike " such stuff as dreams are made of ".

It is here that the futility and sophistry of Pantheism come out in the clearest light. It explains the thinker away into nothingness in the act of attempting to account for his thought. We all set out on our quest after reality—Theist, Materialist and Pantheist alike—by exercising the functions of personal beings. We are aware, we feel, we experience, we act, and in all these things we are conscious of ourselves. We have not learnt to contemplate ourselves, to stand back, apart from our sensations and actions, and to criticize, examine, explain them. We know them and we know ourselves in a sense a great deal more real than this—by the fact of continuously exerting the powers of which we cannot discourse as yet. And here we are not acquiring knowledge : on the contrary, we are exercising intuitive knowledge which has never required to be gained at all, because it is prior to all acquisition ; because it is that, in virtue of which we set out to acquire all else. This knowledge, the foundation of all our knowing, is that of ourselves as personal beings. To persuade us, therefore, to the contrary of this, as Pantheism fain would do, is impossible, so long as we retain rationality. Till this is surrendered to sophistical juggling, we retain the assurance of identity, of selfhood, with which we set out on our original quest.

It is possible, far too possible, alas! that in attempting to analyse this original assurance, this identity which we knew without knowing that we knew it, we may cheat ourselves out of the primary persuasion on which we acted, which we virtually knew, before we attempted to reason about it.

With which, then, of the two, is the last word to lie, in a difference so irreconcilable—with the implicit knowledge from which we set out, and on which all other knowledge depends, or with the reasoned-out, critical, so-called knowledge, which claims to set intuition aside? Theism is all on the side of intuition, of the personal identity on which we acted—and which, indeed, we *were*—before we could reason about it. Theism starts with *I am I*, and with *I am I* it concludes. Pantheism starts with *I am I*, else it could not start at all. It ends with *I am not I*, with denying that the Ego has any existence, except as an illusory manifestation of another, a higher Existence, an Existence which, if it be known to us at all, is known in virtue of the very identity which Pantheism proclaims an illusion. While, to persuade us to accept this Absolute Existence instead of our own poor finite being, the Pantheist assures us that the god of his idolatry is stark and very Naught in virtue of being its Infinite Self. Let the Infinite, the Pantheist says, be real, if all else be illusion. By all means, the Theist replies—but what if your Infinite Itself be the veriest illusion of all; just because, as you maintain, it is Infinite and Absolute Nothingness as well as Infinite and Absolute Being.

But destructive criticism is always easy. It is the positive attainment of a tenable position, a reasonable account of ultimate problems, that constitutes the difficult task. The bankruptcy of Atheism and Pantheism may be proved to the utmost point, but how does Theism fare when it tries to take their place, and to put forward a solution of ultimate questions?

The difficulties, it must be admitted, are inherent in the problems themselves, in the attempt to grapple Infinite Things with an instrument strictly limited and finite. Complete though the failure to grapple them may be on the part of Materialism and Pantheism alike, it is not the perversity of either philosophy, it is primarily the nature of the questions themselves, which prevents their finding a perfect solution.

It were well, then, in examining the Theistic position, to begin by claiming as a point in its favour the fact on which its enemies insist as fatal to all its pretensions—that it does not and cannot aspire to completeness. Where nothing beyond approximation to truth is possible to human thought, it is folly to boast oneself of logical perfection, it is wisdom to admit oneself compassed by limitations.

It is true, then, as the champions of Pantheism assert, that when Theists attribute Infinity to God, the term is not to be pressed to its ultimate logical conclusions ; indeed, that if so pressed, it leads to a logical dilemma in the very form which we have stated above :—either, God, being the Infinite, is also the Absolute, including all things that are in His own all-embracing,

unlimited Existence; or else the Infinity attributed to Him is, logically, no complete Infinity.

Are we, then, to fall back on Agnosticism? to admit that the enigma of existence remains without a key, that the inquiring spirit of man can find no solution at all? Is the origin and destiny of all that exists inscrutable by human intelligence?

The answer of Theism, unassisted by Revelation, would, perhaps, be somewhat as follows:—

First, that in the treatment of any subject the accuracy attainable in human terms must depend on the nature of the subject itself; that in this case the nature of the subject is such that nothing more proves any treatment false than pretensions to completeness of accurate handling; that the claim of Pantheism to logical completeness in dealing with Infinite Existence must form, then, in the eyes of reasonable men but a warning to guard themselves from the grossest of fallacies.

On the other hand, Agnosticism about ultimate problems, the despair which Materialism frankly confesses, its failure to find, in the last resort, any answer to give on the subject, must be held as an abandonment of light and leading, and that by a school which is specially self-confident.

The way, then, lies open for Theism. How far can it advance along it? So far, at any rate, as this: if Materialism and Pantheism have both broken down, while it is not pretended on any hand that there remains a fourth alternative, then Theism has the field to itself. Next, Theism alone, of all the three systems, is based

on the original categories which condition rational thought. Its belief in a Spirit transcending our own contradicts no single original intuition, though it does admittedly transcend their *data*. But, in defence of its pretensions to do so—to pass from knowledge of finite spirits to belief in a Self-Existent Divinity—it claims that our very conception of the finite carries with it the thought of Infinity as its necessary accompaniment and correlative ; a correlative admittedly transcending our logic, refusing to abide our question, yet imperiously demanding our credence ; overpassing our powers by just being what it is ; presenting itself to us under human analogies ; resembling ourselves, or resembled by ourselves, so far as we can discern it at all ; merged, after that point, in excess of light which serves as effectually as darkness itself to bar our prying to its inmost depths ; yet more, not less, convincingly present, for not being wholly comprehensible by us. That it is there we cannot refuse to believe ; the *how*, the manner of its Being, we dare not affirm that we know. But this much we do affirm—that if we professed to know more than we do, we should thereby proclaim our half-knowledge invalid. With thus much premised as a saving clause, it sets forth its claims to attention and allegiance.

Bare Theism, no doubt, is unsatisfying and meagre, but it does attribute the origin of all things to a Being so far resembling ourselves—or, rather, Whom we so far resemble—that at any rate the energy which originates and sustains them is ascribed to a Personal Will ; that is to say, to the only form of power which

accounts, in our limited human experience, for similar facts in every-day life. At any rate the origin of conscious being, as known in ourselves and in other men, is attributed to a similar and a Higher Consciousness. At any rate we are saved the astounding proposition that the glorious spiritual life of man is a mere result of mechanical development out of brute, unconscious, Material things. And, thus far, Theism, as a working hypothesis, serves better than the dreary blanks of Materialism, better than the wordy rhapsodies of Pantheism, as an answer to the Whence and the Whither of all things.

Negation breaks down as a basis for thought—alike the agnostic negations of Materialism, refusing to answer our questions at all, and the more pretentious negations of Pantheism, reducing its Infinite to pure Existence which is also pure Naught. The field, accordingly, lies open to Theism, for simple lack of a fourth alternative.

Now this gives us the right to attribute to Materialism—what its own representatives refuse to admit—an implicit dogmatic assertion in regard to the origin of all things. While disclaiming all *a priori* assertions, it virtually asserts that matter is eternal: by refusing to allow it a Spiritual Originator, it commits itself to this as the only alternative. But matter is no otherwise known to us in fact than as related to spirit and subserving its needs. Nor could it, indeed, be known to us men in any other way. And therefore its eternity, as implied by Materialism, entails an assumption more arbitrary by far than that

which claims for it a Spiritual Originator. For Spirit is the only agency we know which either originates energy itself or applies it to anything else. And, in fact, the ideas of origination and energy are only possible in connexion with Spirit.

Our human dialectic admittedly comes short if it attempt to prove, to the point of demonstration, the Existence and the Agency of God as Creator. Again, it comes equally short when it proclaims Him the Self-Existent Jehovah, yet declines to think of Him as the Absolute. But it can, at any rate, make good its claim to be far less weighted with inevitable difficulties than systems which deny personality to man, and thereby violate the categories of thought—whether such denial lead up in the end to proclaiming the eternal existence of matter, or to describing spirit and matter alike as the mode, the outcome, the illusory display, of absolute, uncreated, infinite Non-entity.

This, perhaps, is as far as Theism can get, at least on the purely intellectual side, unassisted by Revealed Religion—to the point of asserting its superior probability to either of the two alternative systems. There remains, it must be admitted, a damaging gap which weakens its constructive, dialectical position—it fails to solve the logical difficulty of maintaining the Self-Existence of God without going on to accept Him as the Absolute, as without relations to aught but Himself, as leaving room for no other being but His own.

IV.—THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY AS SUCCOURING THEISM, HARD-PRESSED BY MATERIALISM AND PANTHEISM.

Here it is that the doctrine of the Trinity comes in. It lays down that the Perfection of Infinite Existence, so far from excluding the category of Relation, consists from Eternity in the fact of Relations.

For on the side of what we call intellectual Perfection, a Being conceived as Eternally Wise must subsist in at least a duality of Persons ; else He were not true Subject and Object to Himself. But not to think of Him as Eternally Wise were to think of Him as other than truly Divine.

And, again, on the side of what we call the affections, not to think of Him as Eternally Loving were to treat Him as depending on creaturely beings for securing to Himself the highest Perfection. Love, with no object to which to go forth, were a mere potentiality of goodness and not the very Perfection itself. Thus it is that Subsistence in a Third Personality, that a Trinity, in fact, of Eternal Subsistence, is the only possible form under which to conceive of God as Perfect. One Father Eternally realizing Himself as Wise—or rather, as Perfect Wisdom—in the Person of the Word, His Eternal Son, ever generated in the Act of Divine Contemplation. One SON Eternally reflecting the Father as the Effulgence of that Father's Glory, the express Image of His Substance. One Spirit, the Eternal Breathing of Love, Who subsists with the Father and the SON, Who Eternally proceeds from the unoriginate Father, through the SON, His originated

Image and Effulgence. For thus it is that the Personal Spirit completes the Triunity of God—because in Him the Father and the Son pass beyond the Act of mutual Contemplation, which constitutes God Eternally Wise, to the Act of Mutual Self-communication, which constitutes Him Love as the Essence of His Being. Such is the creed of the Church Universal.

Thus Relation, in the thought of a Catholic Christian, so far from limiting the Perfection of God, so far from contradicting the Infinitude of His Nature, is that which alone can constitute Him Perfect, is essential to the thought of His Infinite Existence.

No otherwise than thus does the Doctrine of the Trinity come in to the aid of a hard-pressed Theism, reduced as it is to claiming for itself no more than a higher degree of probability—or a lower degree of improbability—than belongs to its two implacable opponents.

For it sets before us a Doctrine of God, or—shall we rather call it—Facts about God, which support the tentative conceptions of Theism on the side where they are chiefly open to attack.

No words, no thoughts, no ideas, no expressions can state or can realize these Infinite Facts in a way which, to finite human perceptions, shall free them from apparent inconsistencies and contradictions. And therefore the Church declines, as we have seen, to entrust her deposit of spiritual treasure to the changes and chances of mere dialectic : she does not set up an Ontology of her own, by the success or the failure of whose Metaphysic her claim to allegiance shall stand or fall.

But, setting out with the initial categories of knowledge, and affirming no philosophy beyond them, she anticipates in her own revealed body of truth the difficulties which issue in Materialism and Pantheism.

Minds trained to belief in the Triune God, Who takes mankind into union with Himself, need never set out on the quest after truth as though its attainment were matter of logic, taking up particular points of probability, and feeling their way to ultimate certainty by proving them one by one. They know that the so-called Evidences of Faith are not that on which their belief depends; that nothing more can be claimed for these than to prove that practical and devotional faith, as learnt at the foot of the Cross, has no cause to blush for its dialectical position. Each Catholic Christian believes in God because he personally knows Him in Christ; because, like the Martyr-Bishop of Antioch, he is "*Christophoros*,"—one who bears Christ in his heart—through the gifts of the Eternal Spirit of God.

Accordingly, all the dogmatic truths set forth in the chapters above are based on one set of historical facts—that the earliest followers of Jesus of Nazareth found that He had so transformed their lives, had so expanded their spiritual capacities, that they must believe Him to have come on earth as a Visitant from a higher sphere of Existence. Not one definition of dogmatic truth but constitutes a mere expansion of this, a setting forth of certain necessary conditions for retaining this in its saving truth. And not one argument of Christian Apology but is an analysis of laws of thought which show that these spiritual experiences of

ours are not incompatible with reasonable thinking. A Catholic has no more claim than a Theist to have brought to the problems of Infinite and finite demonstrable proofs of logical completeness. But he does set out with a body of Faith which anticipates that which the mind cannot solve. For him there exists no difficulty at all about believing that he limits the Infinite Jehovah by attributing to Him the character of Personality. Nor, again, does he stumble over believing Him Infinite without reducing Him to a negative Absolute. For *Personal*, and *Personality*, in the Catholic sense, when applied to an Infinite Being, connote no thought of imperfection or limitation, as they do when we apply them to ourselves. Nor does *Infinity*, when he uses it of God, bear, to him, a merely negative meaning, as signifying only the absence of limitations. On the contrary, it connotes something wholly positive, a Being, of Whose ineffable Perfections our own poor, limited, personal nature is a true though a faint adumbration; One Who possesses in their perfect form every power, every moral characteristic, of which we present but a broken reflection. To be Infinite means, for the Catholic Christian, to be Good beyond all that we have dreamed about goodness, to be Strong beyond all our conceptions of force, to be Wise with a wisdom to which ours is foolishness, to love with a Love, by the side of which our best affections are tepid and ineffectual. In a word, Infinity is a positive conception: it represents to us, when we apply it to God, the opposite of that colourless, negative Absolute, which pre-

vents the Theist from feeling with certainty that an Infinite Being can be thought of as Personal.

For Personality, indeed, Triune Personality, is to us the most real and positive of facts, the fact on which all others depend in our whole conceptions of God. So far from its conveying to us the thought of limitation, it is that upon which, beyond other beliefs, our Faith in His infinite Perfection is based.

Personality in man is, no doubt, a limitation. Being finite, we only possess personality in virtue of an actual and realized distinction between self and all which is not self ; and it is only as we realize this distinction that we come to a sense of our own personality. All of which conveys to us a sense of limitation.

And each of us, again, in his inmost self, is a monad, an individual being, distinct from every other individual ; nay, only in virtue of our individuality do we men attain to personal existence. We are persons only as being instances of a universal, specimens of a type, members of a species.

It cannot, therefore, but stagger a Theist to find applied to the God Whom he seeks, the false analogies which follow from this when he tries to think of the Deity as a Person.

Apart from the truth of His Triune Being, belief in the Personality of God leads, and must lead, straight to contradictions. But to eyes which see with St. Paul and St. John, our own monadic individual personality offers only a shadowy representation of Perfect, that is of Divine, Personality. In God, as revealed through Christ, Personality involves no individuality ; it is, in-

deed, its polar opposite. The Godhead contains within Itself Eternal Relations of Subject and Object which imply no individual separateness of personalities. In a communion internal to His own Existence, God realizes Himself from Eternity as Personal. Relations of Eternal Contemplation and Love subsist in the Godhead between three Persons, not wholly identical Each with the Others, yet in no wise separable One from Another. It is in this Triune Perfection of Personality, in this Eternal Communion and Love, that to us Infinity is realized and thought of.

When a Catholic Christian adores the Almighty as "The One-without-a-second," He believes that the Almighty contains within Himself all that forms for us as individual persons, the joy, the mutual help and delight, which covers our weaknesses and supplements our deficiencies in the limited life of a finite world. Indeed, it has been said by devotional writers, that when we study the words of our Lord Jesus Christ in the great discourses of the Paschal night, we learn to regard the relations of the Trinity as furnishing the prototype of mutual self-sacrifice, as He taught His disciples to follow it among themselves.

Personality, then, in this Catholic sense, connotes and involves no limited existence, as we might be compelled to admit that it would if we thought of God as the Mondaic Being adored by Islam or imagined by Deists. The God Whom the Catholic believes in and worships is Infinite, Perfect, Self-existent, because, not in spite of, being Personal : for Perfect Personality is Triune Personality.

Theism of the speculative, natural type, being tentative, and accordingly timid, sets out to seek for some Origin of all things ; then, finally, arrives at a Personal Originator as furnishing a hypothesis more positive than Agnosticism, more workable and less difficult than the eternity of matter, more rational than belief in eternal nonentity as the only pure being.

Then faith, as aroused and illuminated by Christ, steps in and reveals to our adoring ken Personality which involves no relations of limitation. Within That Essentially Perfect Being there obtains a Trinity of Eternal Distinctions, constituting Personalities which are not Individual. Here Wisdom and Love, the constituents of Perfection, are not so separate from Originating Power, as that each of the Three should limit the Others, and in turn be limited by Them : while the Three are not so wholly identical but that Each is Eternally related to Each in Relations of essential Activity and Development, proper to, nay forming, the Being of the One. All form One Triad of Divine Perfection unfolding Itself from a single Centre. All subsist in Eternal Love and Contemplation within One Sphere of inviolable Unity.¹

These thoughts might be carried forward in several directions, did the limits assigned to our book permit.

¹ This, perhaps, might be phrased in an alternative form by saying that the truth of the Coinherence of the Persons, which forms, as we saw in Chapter XIV. above, one safeguard of the Church's belief in the Trinity, forms also the answer to Pantheistic objectors when they say that the truth of the Infinity of God leads on to making Him the Impersonal Absolute.

Suffice it to add, as the result of this chapter, that belief in the simplest of Theistic Creeds has been shown to be actually rendered less difficult by the Doctrine which is commonly supposed to encumber it. People ask to be left to a simpler Creed, to be allowed to believe that the Universe and man are the work of Supreme Intelligence and Will, without being asked to hold in addition the Doctrinal tenet of Divine Triunity. Whereas, if that Doctrine be rightly apprehended, it tends to remove the most aggravated difficulties which hinder belief in a Personal God as accounting for the Universe and all that it contains.¹

The mystery remains a mystery still. Were it not too vast to be grasped by the mind, it were all too narrow to satisfy the heart. It is matter of faith and not of demonstration. As of faith, it declines to be confused with demonstration, to hamper itself with claims unwarrantable and undemonstrable. It is a faith, as has been shown repeatedly above, which is not evolved by intellectual effort; it grows out of a sense of spiritual need supplied beyond all expectation by Christ. But, as faith, it comes in to the rescue of Theism. The haunting Pantheistic spectre of the Absolute is laid for every adoring soul which apprehends the truth of the

¹ If any readers of this book care to follow out its author's thoughts on the apologetic value of the Doctrine of the Trinity, they may be found in "Mankind and the Church" (Longmans, 1907), in the concluding paper of the book, entitled "The Hidden Riches of Secret Places". Doctor Illingworth has written a masterly treatise on "The Doctrine of the Trinity Apologetically Considered" (Macmillans, 1907).

Divine Triunity. For the Absolute is that which lies beyond all relations ; whereas Relations Eternal and Divine form part of the Revelation conveyed to the Church by her gradual apprehension of truth in Jesus Christ.

NOTE TO SUPPLEMENTARY CHAPTER (p. 237).

THIS secondary stage of our knowledge of our bodies has been dwelt on above at some length, but it deserves a little additional treatment, as having an importance of its own. It forms an invaluable point of transition when we compare, in point of directness and certainty, our primary, intuitional consciousness of matter as known to us in our bodily organism, and the tertiary, inferential knowledge which is all that we have of an external world.

To set out from this latest, least certain stage—I contemplate an object which I know as a rose. Its form, its colour, its scent appeal to three different senses of my body: I feel no doubt that it actually exists as something entirely independent of myself, accounting for three quite different sensations of sight and feeling and smell. To start with, it never occurs to me to inquire whether I know its existence directly, or whether my belief that there is such an object is simply an inference from the fact of my sensations. I am challenged by thinkers of different schools to substantiate my belief in its objective existence, and I am told that I am totally unable to establish it, that I know and can know but the single fact that I have these impressions on my various senses.

And as far as direct cognition goes, there is no doubt that the challenge is convincing and unanswerable. The impressions are matter of direct cognition; all else is and must be inferential alone.

Must it therefore remain in a region of uncertainty? Can we never establish it as certain fact?

Here it is that we fall back on the secondary knowledge which we have of our various bodily organs. The hand with which I feel the rose is known to me first by an intuitional certainty; it obeys when directed, it aches when struck, it shivers when cold, it is comforted by warmth and refreshed by coolness. And in each and all of these various ways it is known with absolute directness and certainty.

But, next, it is known to me in a different way as an object of sight and of feeling; my eyes and my other hand assure me of its colour and shape. And should these assurances be challenged as inferential, there comes in the original, intuitional knowledge, to make its existence an absolute certainty, and to show that the primary and the secondary knowledge correspond to each other reciprocally and exactly. The aching ran down each one of the fingers; the colour which the eye perceived in those members was distributed in a manner exactly conformable; the shape which the other hand explored, and reported, corresponded exactly to the aching and to the colour. And again, the colour corresponded to the shape, and the shape corresponded to the colour.

The inference that an object which I call my hand exists independently of the eye which sees it, and of the other hand which explores it, is raised, in this instance of a member of my body, to a height of positive certainty far above what is reached in the case of the rose; because the tertiary, inferential conclusion that such an object exists corresponds to the primary, intuitional knowledge that the aching member is part of myself.

But compare our knowledge of the rose, which is outside of us, with this secondary knowledge of the hand, which is

part of us, and we find that they are similar in every respect as regards the impression left on the senses. The only point where they differ from each other is that one can be compared with intuitional knowledge, while the other has no such reference to support it. Hand and eye agreed with each other, their respective impressions tallied exactly, in the case of the rose as in that of the hand.

If then we have found in the case of the hand that our impressions were backed by our original intuitions (in a word, that they were fully and exactly to be trusted when they led us to believe that the hand existed, not only that we had an impression that it did), then surely we are entitled to gather from this that every impression on our various senses is due to a world of external matter, existing in correspondence with what we perceive, that a world of matter actually exists, and that to it we owe our sensations and perceptions.

ADDITIONAL NOTE TO CHAP. V, p. 76, AND
CHAP. VI, p. 82.

THE GOSPEL CANTICLES COMPARED WITH ST. PETER'S
ADDRESS ON THE DAY OF PENTECOST.

AMONG the services rendered to the Church by St. Luke there are two which get less than their meed of thanks. He fixed for her two fleeting, delicate moments in the growth of her instinctive recognition of her Lord. Through the Canticles in the opening Chapters of his Gospel, we know how the thought of the Christ being at hand affected the tenderest believing hearts among those who were "waiting for Redemption at Jerusalem," including the Virgin Mother herself. From his report of St. Peter's first sermon at Pentecost, we know how much the Apostles understood of the finished Work of their Ascended Lord, before matured devotional thought could do its work in believing minds. After-elaboration and conscious study could never have given us the Sermon at Pentecost, much less the Songs of the Virgin Mother, of "Old Zachary and Simeon," in all their native simplicity, with their perfect expression of passing moments never to be repeated in human experience.

The expectant Mother of the Word Incarnate, as her Song represents her in the pages of St. Luke, speaks more after the manner of the Mother of Samuel than after that of the Epistle to the Hebrews. The "divers portions and divers manners" of the old revelation of God breathe through the Canticles embodied in the Gospel: "The Effulgence of the Father's Glory and the express Image of His Substance," as about to be revealed when "He spake in His Son," are hardly

even suggested in any of them. They breathe the air of prescient expectancy which belongs to the Old Testament Scriptures. The satisfied sense of fulfilled desire which permeates the Epistles as a whole, which comes out in unstudied, anticipatory fashion throughout the Synoptic Gospels, and which dominates form and matter alike in the Gospel according to St. John, is entirely wanting in them.

In like manner, St. Peter, in the sermon at Pentecost, is the man who has lived through the Ministry of Christ, who has faced the experiences of the supper-table, of Gethsemane, of Calvary, and of the room with locked doors. Yet he sees them all with the wondering eyes of a disciple not fully illuminated as yet. He knows that they stand for Salvation to the world, he knows that through the crime of crimes the maddened wrath of man has worked out the Righteousness of God. Yet his address forms the link between the days of the Ministry—"the things which Jesus began both to do and teach"—and the days of perfect illumination and declaration when "the Mystery hidden from ages and generations is now made known to us through the Spirit". The gain to the Church of these connecting links—of the Canticles, intermediate between the two Covenants, of the Sermon, intermediate between the Three and St. John—it would be difficult perhaps to over-estimate. St. Luke had stood on the beach at Miletus, when St. Paul addressed the Ephesian elders and declared "the whole counsel of God". He had been the frequent companion in travel of the man who "had known Christ after the flesh, yet now, henceforth knew Him no more". He had, probably, himself been admitted into the Church at a time when the fuller teaching about Christ had grown up from the rudimentary lessons of Pentecost. Can we think that it was only the intuition of genius which made him put into the mouth of St. Peter, still more into that

of the Virgin with Child, those utterances stamped with the impress of the times at which he says that they were delivered? Is it not, on the contrary, abundantly plain that they represent the carefully accumulated knowledge of one who has learnt from the actors themselves what they said at those two supreme moments of history?

We cannot picture to ourselves, I must think, a man putting together for himself, later on, in the light of fuller Christian teaching, a Song appropriate to the Virgin Mother, when first she realized the greatness of her destiny—and making that Song, from first to last, move along on the level of knowledge and devotion engendered by the spirit of the older Dispensation, not soaring once to the loftier conceptions of, say, the Epistle to the Ephesians. Hardly more could he have put into the mouth of St. Peter an Address to embody the results of Pentecost, and have made him, with its dew still fresh on his forehead, deliver himself so predominantly as he does, on the level of his own Galilean experiences, and not on that of his later conceptions. As a fact, this Address is the connecting link between the narrative of the Three and that of St. John, exactly as the Canticles form a similar link between the Old and the New Dispensations.

What proof could be adduced more convincing than this of the total ingenuousness, the faithfulness to fact, of St. Luke in his “former” and in his “later treatise”?

APPENDIX.

THE PROPRIETY AND THE LIMITATIONS OF ADDRESSING OURSELVES IN PRAYER TO THE SEVERAL PERSONS OF THE TRINITY SEVERALLY.

PIETY instinctively addresses itself in prayer to Father, to Son and to Holy Spirit; to any One Person of the Trinity without explicit mention of any except that One. It were impossible to deny to the practice the sanction of hoary antiquity. How far can it justify itself on grounds of theological propriety and of practical wisdom? How far could such prayer introduce unawares a leaning in the direction of Tritheism?

That it might run to unsafe and unreasonable excess, it were perhaps impossible to doubt. But the sober belief of the sanest of thinkers has sanctioned it without hesitation. John Keble said of the *Veni Creator*, addressed as it is to the Holy Spirit, with merely a mention of the Father and the Son, that, next to the Lord's Prayer, he did not know any devotion which could effect more good for the soul.

What is it then which renders it justifiable and what are the safeguards with which we should surround it? In the case, for example, of such devotions as the opening sentences of the Litany, can we make sure that the Adorable Names of the Three Blessed Persons of the Trinity are not being taken into our lips without any other meaning than that of addressing the Almighty under three distinct aspects of His Providence and Grace? May we not in this way be profaning Those Names into a purely Sabellian unreality? Or, again, if this danger be avoided, may we not run into the

opposite extreme, and find ourselves in peril of addressing our prayers to three distinct Beings, in fact, to three Gods?

Uninstructed piety might err, it is to be feared, in either of these directions. Or, again, mere sentimentality, the mere sense of relations with the Man of men, may intrude itself into people's minds if they address themselves with disproportionate frequency to our Lord Jesus Christ as the Human Saviour—an objection to the use of some popular hymns which was felt, as the writer has heard, by so ardent a champion of the Incarnation as the late Bishop Westcott of Durham.

The safeguards of devotion in this matter are practically the same as the safeguards of doctrine: *lex credendi, lex supplicandi* is a principle of universal application: nothing must be used in our prayers for which we cannot find room in our creed.

An intelligent Christian prayer must show, in the ultimate resort, that it is addressed to the Three in One, not only when the distinction between the Three is in no way mentioned or suggested, but even when it expressly comes in, and we address ourselves to Father, to Son, or to Holy Ghost.

It is easy to see how this will be the case if we address ourselves to the Father in particular. Being the Fount and Origin of all Divinity, Himself Originated of None, it is plain that in addressing ourselves to Him, we necessarily include in our approaches the Son Whom He Begets from Eternity, and the Spirit Who Proceeds from Him through the Son.

But this principle of the Monarchia, of the Triad unfolding from a Single Centre, carries with it the mutual Coinherence of All the Three Blessed Persons. When we address ourselves, therefore, to the Son or to the Spirit, we cannot be excluding from our prayer the Father, from Whom, and in Whom, Each of these Blessed Persons has His Being. The

principle is less obvious perhaps when we appeal to the Son or to the Spirit ; because the thought of the entire Co-inherence connects itself less obviously with devotions such as these than with words addressed directly to the Father, the Fountain of Godhead. Nevertheless, when we think the matter out, the justification obtains in these cases as surely as in devotions to the Father.

And if it be true, as perhaps it may be, that "there is not in all, this knowledge," and that, accordingly, unintelligent piety might run an actual risk of degenerating into Tritheism in devotion, still, perhaps devotions to the Son and the Holy Ghost may be a safeguard against another real peril : they may serve to keep alive in the minds of the uninstructed belief in the Very Godhead of the Persons thus addressed.

It is probably in the direction of forgetting this truth that the danger will be found to lie for thoughtless or unintelligent Christians ; while that of worshipping three Gods need only be pointed out to be avoided.

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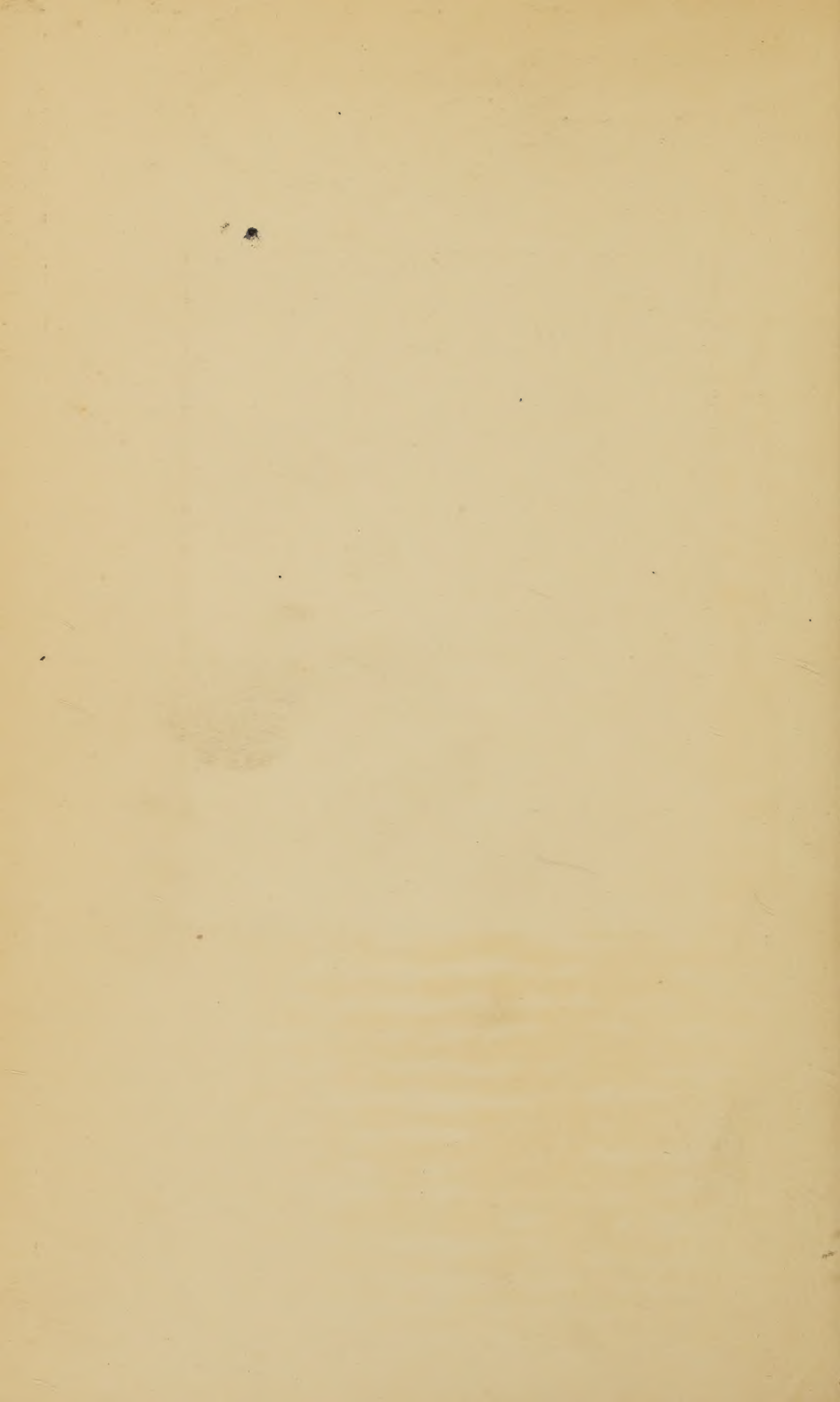
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